Exploring Society: India and Beyond

Social Science Textbook for Grade 8 | Part 1

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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

Reprint 2026-27

0881 – Exploring Society: India and Beyond
Social Science Textbook for Grade 8 Part 1

ISBN 978-93-5729-293-1

First Edition
July 2025 Ashadha 1947

Reprinted
March 2026 Phalguna 1947

PD 740T BS

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₹ 65.00

Printed on 80 GSM paper with NCERT watermark

Published at the Publication Division by the Secretary, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 016 and printed at S.G. Print Packs Pvt. Ltd., F-478, Sector-63, Noida - 201 301 (U.P.)

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Foreword

The National Education Policy 2020 envisages a system of education in the country that is rooted in Indian ethos and its civilisational accomplishments in all fields of knowledge and human endeavour. At the same time, it aims to prepare students to engage constructively with the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century. The basis for this aspirational vision has been well laid out by the *National Curriculum Framework for School Education* (NCF-SE) 2023 across curricular areas at all stages. By nurturing students' inherent abilities across all the five planes of human existence (*pañchakośhas*), the Foundational and the Preparatory Stages set the stage for further learning at the Middle Stage. Spanning Grade 6 to Grade 8, the Middle Stage serves as a critical three-year bridge between the Preparatory and Secondary Stages.

The NCF-SE 2023, at the Middle Stage, aims to equip students with the skills that are needed to grow as they advance in their lives. It endeavours to enhance their analytical, descriptive, and narrative capabilities, and to prepare them for the challenges and opportunities that await them. A diverse curriculum, covering nine subjects ranging from three languages — including at least two languages native to India — to Science, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Art Education, Physical Education and Well-being, and Vocational Education, promotes their holistic development.

Such a transformative learning culture requires certain essential conditions. One of them is to have appropriate textbooks in different curricular areas, as these textbooks will play a central role in mediating between content and pedagogy — a role that strikes a judicious balance between direct instruction and opportunities for exploration and inquiry. Among the other conditions, classroom arrangement and teacher preparation are crucial to establish conceptual connections both within and across curricular areas.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training, on its part, is committed to providing students with such high-quality textbooks. Various Curricular Area Groups, constituted for this

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purpose, comprising notable subject experts, pedagogues, and practising teachers as their members, have made all possible efforts to develop such textbooks. The Social Science textbook for Grade 8 — *Exploring Society: India and Beyond, Part 1* — has been prepared for the final year of the Middle Stage. It carries forward the themes and approach of Grades 6 and 7; the focus is on core concepts and major developments. It endeavours to keep students engaged in learning through illustrations, maps, and pictures laid out in an attractive design. There are abundant reflective exercises and activities embedded in the text to support exploration, discovery, and meaning-making. The thematic approach with a multidisciplinary lens continues, helping students understand ideas and concepts holistically. The text integrates the values we desire our students to develop, is rooted in the Indian cultural context, and introduces global perspectives in an age-appropriate manner. For all practical purposes, it has, to my mind, succeeded in its curricular goals: first, to foster natural curiosity among students through a proper selection of content; and second, to employ a pedagogical approach in line with the recommendations of NCF-SE 2023.

However, in addition to this textbook, students at this stage should also be encouraged to explore various other learning resources. School libraries play a crucial role in making such resources available. Besides, the role of parents and teachers will also be invaluable in guiding and encouraging students to do so.

With this, I express my gratitude to all those who have been involved in the development of this textbook and hope that it will meet the expectations of all stakeholders. At the same time, I also invite suggestions and feedback from all its users for further improvement in the coming years.

March 2025
New Delhi

Dinesh Prasad Saklani
Director
National Council of Educational
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Letter to the Student

Dear Student,

You have now entered the third and final year of the Middle Stage. In Social Science, this year we will explore more aspects of our country, India, across all five themes — India and the World: Land and the People, Tapestry of the Past, Our Cultural Heritage and Knowledge Traditions, Governance and Democracy, and Economic Life Around Us. You will encounter different types of people who lived in the past, their accomplishments and their mistakes, the impact they had on the economy, society and culture, and what they mean to us today. As you are older now, there will be a little more independent reading, writing and doing through reflective exercises and activities including some small research studies that you would need to take up. There is a little more text in the book as well. As with Grades 6 and 7, we have made ample use of colourful maps, pictures and illustrations, which we hope will help you to visualise better.

Since good education should promote understanding and reflection, we have created opportunities for you to explore, discover, think, imagine, create, ask questions and propose answers.

You will notice how each theme brings together multiple inputs from several disciplines — not only history, geography, political science or economics, but also art, literature and science. This brings us closer to real life and helps us understand the events of today.

In short, you will observe that the threads of the past continue to be part of today's tapestry and give us the design for strengthening it for tomorrow.

Given India's rich past and enormous dimensions — both geographical and human — we were very eager to share a lot with you; deciding what to include and what to leave out led to arguments and heartaches, because all those involved wanted to give you the best. In the end, it has been an enriching and

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gratifying experience. We hope it will be an enjoyable experience for you too!

***

We need to add an important detail. In this textbook, every part of it — text, side box, image or map — can be subject to evaluation and assessment. There are however five exceptions:

- *The quotation or quotations on the first pages of chapters.* Some are straightforward, others offer deep thought. Do not worry if you do not understand them at the first reading; they are meant to stimulate you or inspire you.
- *Wherever we have mentioned in the text, "You need not remember this."*
- *The diacritical signs on some Sanskrit words* — do look at 'Your Journey through this Textbook' in the next few pages to understand what we mean.
- *The Glossary* (at the end of the textbook).

No evaluation should bear on these five aspects.

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Your Journey through this Textbook

This is your final year in the Middle Stage — a stage where you've been discovering new ideas, asking questions, and building an understanding of the world around you. By now, you are more confident in studying Social Science and are ready to go deeper. This year, our journey will take us on an exploration and reflection on natural resources and how we use them, the tapestry of our past as political and cultural transformations took place, and how we have organised the functioning of our democracy through our electoral process. Together we'll continue asking important questions about how societies organise themselves, how resources become products, and how citizens participate in governance.

This textbook has interesting features. As you flip through it, you will see colourful illustrations, including pictures, maps and drawings of many kinds. Let us give you a quick tour of the book and its features. Your teacher will also guide you through it.

Each chapter begins with an **inspiring quotation** from a renowned person or text. Read it and let it stay with you. Some of these quotations are profound thoughts. Don't worry if you do not understand right away; you can return to them later, and they can also be discussed in the class. Here's an example —

> *For a country like India, the largest contribution to growth and productivity will probably come about from more efficiently using land, labour and capital, thus they must be used more efficiently.*
>
> *— Bibek Debroy,*
> *Chairman, Economic Advisory Council*
> *to the Prime Minister (2017-24)*

The **main text** is written in simple language. You will learn about people and places in India and beyond.

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Biodiversity loss: The decline in the variety of life on Earth

Responsible and Wise Use of Natural Resources: Stewardship

Sustaining life on Earth requires that we respect Nature and use natural resources in a way that enables the restoration and regeneration of renewable resources, and the responsible and judicious use of non-renewable ones.

Scientists studying these aspects have warned that the irresponsible treatment of natural resources has led to pollution, **biodiversity loss** and climate change, which has been taking place at an increased pace in recent years.

Technical words are explained in the margin right next to the text. They are also listed in the **glossary** at the end of the textbook. In addition, we have included a few words you may not be familiar with. Do consult the glossary often.

'The Big Questions', between three and five, give you an idea of what you are going to explore in the chapter.

The Big Questions?

1. *Who were the Marathas? How did they manage to become the largest pan-Indian power before the British took over?*
2. *What were some features of their governance?*
3. *What impact did the Maratha Empire leave in Indian history?*

As we move through the chapter you will find some sections called **'LET'S EXPLORE', 'THINK ABOUT IT', 'LET'S REMEMBER'** which propose activities, in-text exercises, recall of concepts learnt earlier or will invite further reflection.

LET'S EXPLORE

About 34 per cent of eligible voters did not exercise their right to vote in the 2024 elections. Why do you think this is so? What are some challenges people face in exercising their rights? Design and conduct a short survey among adults in your family and neighbourhood to answer these questions. Analyse the data and write a report with suggestions on how it may be possible to ensure everyone votes.

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THINK ABOUT IT

- What could be the lessons for young entrepreneurs that you can gather from the above case?
- Does the existing knowledge of the entrepreneur help in finding solutions to the problem at hand? Or do they need to seek other sources?
- Is profit the only motivation for an entrepreneur? Why or why not?
- What are the other personality traits required to be a successful entrepreneur?

LET'S REMEMBER

India is a parliamentary democracy where, at the national level, citizens choose representatives for the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Parliament). They focus on issues affecting the entire country. In addition, voters elect representatives from their constituencies to the legislative assemblies in the state and union territories where they are registered. These members focus primarily on regional issues.

'Don't miss out' brings out intriguing or fun facts that will trigger your curiosity.

DON'T MISS OUT

T.N. Seshan became the Chief Election Commissioner in 1990. He brought in reforms to ensure free and fair elections, among them: campaigning to follow precise rules, voter IDs to eliminate proxy voting, and strict vigilance on spending by candidates. T.N. Seshan worked hard to protect the rights of voters and is often remembered as the officer who made Indian elections fairer, transparent and fearless!

Fig. 5.21. T.N. Seshan

Before we move on ...

- 'Natural resources' are materials and substances that occur in Nature and are valuable to humans.
- There are different ways of categorising resources; renewable and non-renewable are useful categories.
- The 'resource curse' can be overcome through investments in the development of technology and skills.
- We need to become vigilant about the rate at which we use renewables so as not to overexploit them; judicious and wise use of non-renewables will enable stretching their use for a longer period of time.

At the end of every chapter, **'Before we move on'** sums up some of the core ideas that the chapter tried to convey. A choice of exercises, questions or projects follow.

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On the first page of every chapter, you will find a QR code leading you to resources related to the content of the chapter. Do scan it, or take an adult's help to scan it, and browse through the material.

Finally, note that the chapter "Reshaping India's Political Map" is meant to be read alongside the chapter "Cultural Currents: 13th to 17th Centuries", which will be found in Part 2 of this textbook (to appear later in 2025).

Accordingly this Part I does not have Theme C, "Our Cultural Heritage and Knowledge Traditions". It will appear in Part II.

Your teacher will be with you on this journey of exploring this textbook. We hope you will read parts of it with your parents or guardians too. Maybe you can try out some of the activities with them!

We wish you an enjoyable journey through Social Science and its rich insights into human life and society.

A note on the pronunciation of Sanskrit words

Since this textbook is in English, we use the Roman alphabet. But we will also encounter some words in Sanskrit and a few other Indian languages. The Roman alphabet cannot make their pronunciation clear without some additional marks or signs, such as dashes, dots or accents, called 'diacritical signs' or 'diacritics'. You can ignore all these signs if you wish, and you don't need to remember them. However, as we are using only a few simple signs, you will find it easy to get used to them. You will also find that they help you pronounce Sanskrit words fairly correctly. (Please note that for proper names, we have used diacritics only up to 1200 CE, not afterwards.)

Here is how they work:

- A short dash (called 'macron') over a vowel makes it long. For instance, *dāna* is pronounced 'daana'; *līlā* is pronounced 'leelaa'; *sūtra* is *sootra*.
- *śh* and *ṣh* are pronounced more or less as 'sh' in 'shall' (there is a slight difference, since they correspond to श and ष in the Devanagari script, but you can ignore it in practice). So *śhāstra* is pronounced 'shaastra'; *kṣhīra* is 'ksheera'.
- Consonants with a dot below them (*ḍ, ṭ* and *ṇ* mainly) are 'hard', i.e. pronounced by hitting the tongue on the palate; without a dot, they

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are soft, with the tongue on the teeth. (As a rough comparison, in the preceding English word 'teeth', the first 't' is hard, while the final 'th' is soft.) Examples of hard consonants: Āryabhaṭa, *gaṇa, paṭhana* (studying), *pīṭha, goṣṭhī* (association, assembly), *dhanāḍhya* (rich), *aṇu* (atom).

- Finally, *ṛ* is the Devanagari letter ऋ. We choose to write it as *ṛi,* although in some parts of India it is also pronounced as *ṛu*. So we write 'Ṛig Veda', for instance.

For those who wish to know the precise correspondence between the Devanagari alphabet and the Roman script in our system, the tables of short and long vowels are as follows:

Devanagari	Roman script
अ	*a*
इ	*i*
उ	*u*
ऋ	*ṛi*
ए	*e*
ओ	*o*
Devanagari	**Roman script**
आ	*ā*
ई	*ī*
ऊ	*ū*
ॠ	*ṝi*
ऐ	*ai*
औ	*au*

And the table of consonants:

Guttural	क	ka	ख	kha	ग	ga	घ	gha	ङ	ṅa	ह	ha
Palatal	च	cha	छ	chha	ज	ja	झ	jha	ञ	ña	य	ya
Cerebral	ट	ṭa	ठ	ṭha	ड	ḍa	ढ	ḍha	ण	ṇa	र	ra
Dental	त	ta	थ	tha	द	da	ध	dha	न	na	ल	la
Labial	प	pa	फ	pha	ब	ba	भ	bha	म	ma	व	va
Sibilants	श	śha	ष	ṣha	स	sa						

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CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Part III (Articles 12 – 35)
(Subject to certain conditions, some exceptions
and reasonable restrictions)
guarantees these

Fundamental Rights

Right to Equality

- before law and equal protection of laws;
- irrespective of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth;
- of opportunity in public employment;
- by abolition of untouchability and titles.

Right to Freedom

- of expression, assembly, association, movement, residence and profession;
- of certain protections in respect of conviction for offences;
- of protection of life and personal liberty;
- of free and compulsory education for children between the age of six and fourteen years;
- of protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.

Right against Exploitation

- for prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour;
- for prohibition of employment of children in hazardous jobs.

Right to Freedom of Religion

- freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion;
- freedom to manage religious affairs;
- freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion;
- freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in educational institutions wholly maintained by the State.

Cultural and Educational Rights

- for protection of interests of minorities to conserve their language, script and culture;
- for minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

Right to Constitutional Remedies

- by issuance of directions or orders or writs by the Supreme Court and High Courts for enforcement of these Fundamental Rights.

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Constitution of India

Part IV A (Article 51 A)

Fundamental Duties

It shall be the duty of every citizen of India —

(a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;

(b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;

(c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;

(d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;

(e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;

(f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;

(g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures;

(h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;

(i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;

(j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement;

*(k) who is a parent or guardian, to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.

Note: The Article 51A containing Fundamental Duties was inserted by the Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976 (with effect from 3 January 1977).

*(k) was inserted by the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002 (with effect from 1 April 2010).

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Acknowledgements

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) acknowledges the guidance and support of the esteemed Chairperson and members of the National Curriculum Frameworks Oversight Committee for their invaluable contributions in overseeing the translation of NCF-SE 2023 perspectives into the textbook. NCERT is also deeply grateful to the Chairperson, Co-Chairperson, and members of the National Syllabus and Teaching-Learning Materials Development Committee for their continuous guidance and thorough review of the textbook. Furthermore, NCERT extends its heartfelt thanks to the Chairpersons and members of the Curricular Area Groups (CAGs) for Social Science and for Economics, as well as other relevant CAGs, for their support and guidelines on the cross-cutting themes.

The participation and contributions from members of the Social Science and Economics CAGs have been indispensable. Additional thanks are due to the Chairpersons and members of other CAGs involved in integrating cross cutting themes into this textbook.

The unstinted efforts and exemplary dedication of the Social Science team of Programme Office, NSTC — Suparna Diwakar, Bhawna Paliwal, Divya Indra Chatterjee, Riddhi Garg, Purva Bhatt — in assisting the making of this textbook at every stage, are gratefully acknowledged. We are also much obliged to Shweta Rao of the Banyan Tree for her outstanding contribution to the textbook's appealing design and visual quality, and her steadfast work throughout the entire process. We are also indebted to Gouri Srivastava, Department of Education in Social Sciences (DESS) and member-coordinator, TDT, Social Science for Grade 8, for her constant assistance and advice; and to M.V. Srinivasan, NCERT's Department of Education in Social Sciences and member-convener of the CAG Economics and head of NCERT's Publication Division, for his patient guidance and inputs. Thanks are also to Deepika Shukla, *JPF*, DESS for her constant assistance.

The Council is grateful to M.D. Srinivas, Centre for Policy Studies (Chennai); Amartya Kumar Dutta, Indian Statistical Institute (Kolkata), and V. Ramanathan, Department of Chemistry, IIT-BHU, for their expert guidance in the area of Indian Knowledge Systems.

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The Council is thankful to M Pramod Kumar, Fanindra Sharma, Rajashri Saligrama and Siddhartha A Bhargava (members of the Programme Office, NSTC) for their valuable inputs.

The Council is grateful to Aradhana Gupta, *Artist*, *Mentor*, NMM and *President*, Global Knowledge Network Society (GKNS); Manasi Prasad, Carnatic Vocalist, Board Member (Former *Director*), Indian Music Experience Museum, Arts Consultant; Suhani Dhanki Mody, Bharatanatyam artist, teacher and international performer, for offering their expert guidance.

The illustrators — Albert Shrivastava, Attri Chetan, Nidhi Kashyap, Prachi Sahasrabudhe, Prashant Singh — deserve commendation for their innovative illustrations, and sketches, which have significantly enriched the visual quality of the textbook. The contribution made by the cartographer Arkaprovo Das is much appreciated.

The contributions of Soumma Chandra, *Editor* (contractual); Deepti Garg, C. Thanglenmang Doungel and Dwaipayan Upadhayay, *Proofreaders* (contractual), Publication Division are also appreciated. The NCERT gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Pawan Kumar Barriar, *In charge*, DTP Cell; Manoj Kumar, *DTP Operator* (contractual), Publication Division, NCERT for all their efforts in giving this book its final shape.

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THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a [1]**[SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC]** and to secure to all its citizens :

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the [2][unity and integrity of the Nation];

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

---

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)

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Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam:

The whole world is one family

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CHAPTER 1

Natural Resources and Their Use

Concerned social scientists are clear on what we need to do: we must move toward a regenerative economy, an economy that operates in harmony with nature, repurposing used resources, minimizing waste, and replenishing depleted resources. We must return to the innate wisdom of nature herself, the ultimate regenerator and recycler of all resources.

— Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac in 'The Future We Choose'

Fig. 1.1. Dudhsagar waterfall and the railway bridge, Goa, India

The Big Questions

1. *How do we categorise natural resources?*
2. *What is the connection between the distribution of natural resources and different aspects of life?*
3. *What are the implications of unsustainable use / over exploitation of natural resources?*

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Fig. 1.2. A microhydel plant in Himachal Pradesh—the power of flowing water converted into electricity

Fig. 1.3. An offshore oil rig extracts petroleum from below the seabed

When does Nature become a Resource?

One of the meanings of the word 'Nature' is the totality of life and non-life forms that are part of our environment but have not been created by humans. When humans use these for their sustenance, or create new things from them for consumption, these elements of Nature become 'resources'. For example, trees are part of the environment; they exist independently of humans. When we cut them and convert their wood into furniture, we see the trees as a resource.

Often these entities are not easily accessible. For example, there may be petroleum in places deep under the ocean that we do not have the technology to access, or the extraction cost may be too high; or it may be culturally unacceptable like cutting trees in sacred groves. So, for an entity to be called a resource, it should be technologically accessible, and its exploitation should be economically feasible and culturally acceptable. (Usually, the word 'exploitation' has a negative connotation; in the context we use it here, it means 'extraction, utilisation and consumption of Natural resources'.)

The Earth has treasures, many of which have formed over millions of years, and which humans have taken and learnt to use. These include the most obvious ones like water, air and soil, and also the not-so-obvious ones like coal, petroleum, precious stones, metal ores, timber, etc.

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Fig. 1.4. Gentle ploughing causes minimal disturbance to the underground ecosystem and retains soil moisture.

Fig. 1.5. Honey from a beehive

DON'T MISS OUT

→ In many indigenous traditions of the world, Nature is considered sacred. You have read about this. In such traditions, Nature is a nurturer and nourisher.

→ Do you know of practices that reflect this?

Fig. 1.6. Tulasī puja for wellbeing

THINK ABOUT IT

Take a pause. Look at yourself and the things around you. What is the origin of each of them? At some point they all lead to Nature; even the plastic button on your shirt.

In short, we apply the term 'natural resources' to materials and substances that occur in Nature and are valuable to humans.

Categories of Natural Resources

In Science, we learn the usefulness of categorisation and naming — we use some shared characteristics (or criteria) when we categorise ideas or things; we name the categories so that we can refer to them with just one word or a short phrase. When these names and meanings are shared across groups of people, it helps

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us discuss a set of ideas or things without needing to describe them every time. We can communicate more effectively, too. In earlier classes, you learnt about living and non-living things. As soon as we use these words, you know what they mean. This is a simple example of categories.

We do the same with natural resources.

THINK ABOUT IT

What might be the different criteria we can use to categorise natural resources?

One of the ways we could categorise natural resources is based on the uses we put them to — essential for our life, source for materials and sources for energy.

Resources essential for life

Life could not exist on Earth without the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. We take these from the atmosphere, the rivers and ponds, and through the cultivation of soil or other living things. We cannot make the air we breathe, the water we drink, or the soil which gives us food.

Resources for materials

Human beings create physical objects out of Nature's gifts. We make them for our utility or to create things of beauty that enrich our lives and those of others — a piece of wood can be transformed into a chair and also carved into a statuette. India's geographical diversity provides us with a wide variety of natural resources, from wood to marble, and coal to gold.

Resources for energy

Energy is a cornerstone of modern living — electricity for our buildings, transportation, and all types of production processes. This energy can come from diverse natural sources: coal, water, petroleum, natural gas, sunlight, wind, etc.

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Fig. 1.7. River water, a renewable resource as long as glaciers and forests exist

Fig. 1.8. We can take timber from the forest, in limited quantities, for a long time if we allow it to regenerate.

Renewable and non-renewable resources

A second way of categorising natural resources could be based on whether they are renewable or not.

A general principle of Nature is that it functions in a restorative and regenerative way. Restoration is the process of returning something to its original healthy state if it has been degraded or damaged. Nature heals, renews and maintains herself over time. A cut on your skin will normally heal; a forest recovers after a wildfire. Regeneration goes beyond restoration. It is about Nature's ability to create new life and the conditions for thriving.

We plant trees in areas that may have lost them on account of human interventions like clearing forests for housing. Planting the types of trees that were originally growing there restores the ecosystem — the trees provide food and shelter for birds, squirrels and other creatures, enabling life to return.

Nature works in cycles where there is no waste. Take a forest. Let's say a tree falls in the forest. It decomposes with the bacteria, fungi and insects feeding on it. The tree becomes part of the soil enriching it. New trees and plants grow from seeds ... eventually some will fall and the cycle starts again.

These are examples of Nature's principle of restoration and regeneration in practice.

Renewable resources

Renewable resources exhibit these characteristics over time. Most of India has abundant sunshine. In the natural course, rivers are

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Fig. 1.9. Offering arghyam to Sūrya, the sun-god, in gratitude.

fed regularly by rain and melting glaciers, forests renew themselves, soil replenishes itself through natural processes, and so on.

Solar energy, wind energy, energy from flowing water, timber from forests are renewable resources as long as we are able to manage them in a sustainable manner.

However, for them to remain renewable there is a condition — the natural rhythm of restoration and regeneration must not be disturbed. If we harvest timber faster than the forest can grow trees, we will eventually deplete the forest. Scientists have shown that through irresponsible human actions, many of Nature's cycles have been disturbed. A combination of several factors interacting — fossil fuel-driven industrialisation and the cutting down of forests for agriculture and other purposes are two of them — has led to rising temperatures that we are experiencing; on account of this, the glaciers in some places in the Himalayas are melting at a rate faster than precipitation can replace them. This has implications on water security for the populations living in the plains dependent on the 'water tower'.

Arghyam: offering, generally of water, as a mark of respect or gratitude

DON'T MISS OUT

→ Traditionally, communities had a system of regulating (or refraining from) fishing during the spawning season to enable the maintenance of the fish population. However, the commercialisation of fishing resulted in over-fishing. In the case of a type of fish called tuna, for example, the rapid and extensive decline in their population led to some agreements on control of fishing. Nevertheless, this important type of fish that keeps the ocean ecosystem in balance by consuming smaller fish, shrimps, etc., is on a decline.

→ Do you know of other traditional practices that help the ecosystem to stay in balance?

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We need industries to produce the goods we consume. The process also creates wastes that are frequently discharged into rivers and other water bodies. Often, these wastes cannot decay to become the food of some lifeform. Instead, it leads to a disturbance in Nature's cycle of restoration and regeneration, leading to a situation where the river becomes poisonous and cannot support life.

Fig. 1.10. Waste from industries is often disposed without proper treatment

LET'S EXPLORE

Identify human actions in your surroundings that result in Nature losing her ability to restore and regenerate. What types of interventions can be undertaken to restore Nature's cycle?

DON'T MISS OUT

- Ecosystem functions and ecosystem services: Nature has some inherent ways of working. For example, trees naturally produce oxygen. When these natural processes benefit humans, we call them 'ecosystem services'. We can think of it like this: a forest naturally filters water, prevents soil erosion, and provides habitat for animals — these are ecosystem functions. When we benefit from clean water, protected farmland, and pollinated crops because of that forest, we are receiving ecosystem services from Nature.
- A mature tree produces about 275 litres of oxygen per day (this varies a little depending on the type of tree). A human being needs about 350 litres of oxygen every day (this can change based on the type of activity that an individual engages in, their height and weight, and so on).

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LET'S EXPLORE

Take up a small research study to assess the types of renewable resources in your region; you may discuss with your teacher the geographical area of your study and sources to access information that you may need. What has been the change in their status over time? Make a small report that identifies the reasons for the change and what may be done.

Non-renewable resources

Non-renewable resources are created over long periods. They cannot be replenished at the rate we use them. For example, fossil fuels (coal and petroleum), and minerals and metals like iron, copper and gold, are non-renewable resources. India has significant quantities of coal reserves. We mine coal to meet our growing need for energy, but it has been estimated that the coal reserves in India may last another 50 years; the demand for electricity has been increasing as the population expands and development work accelerates. Till more sustainable options become available widely, we need to use the coal we have judiciously.

LET'S EXPLORE

What are the non-renewable resources that you use daily, directly or indirectly? What are the possible renewable substitutes? What are some of the steps we can take to transition to renewables?

Distribution of Natural Resources and its Implications

Natural resources are not evenly distributed across our planet or even within countries. This uneven distribution shapes human settlements, trade patterns, international relations, and conflicts too. Many wars have been fought, and continue to be fought, to gain control over natural resources.

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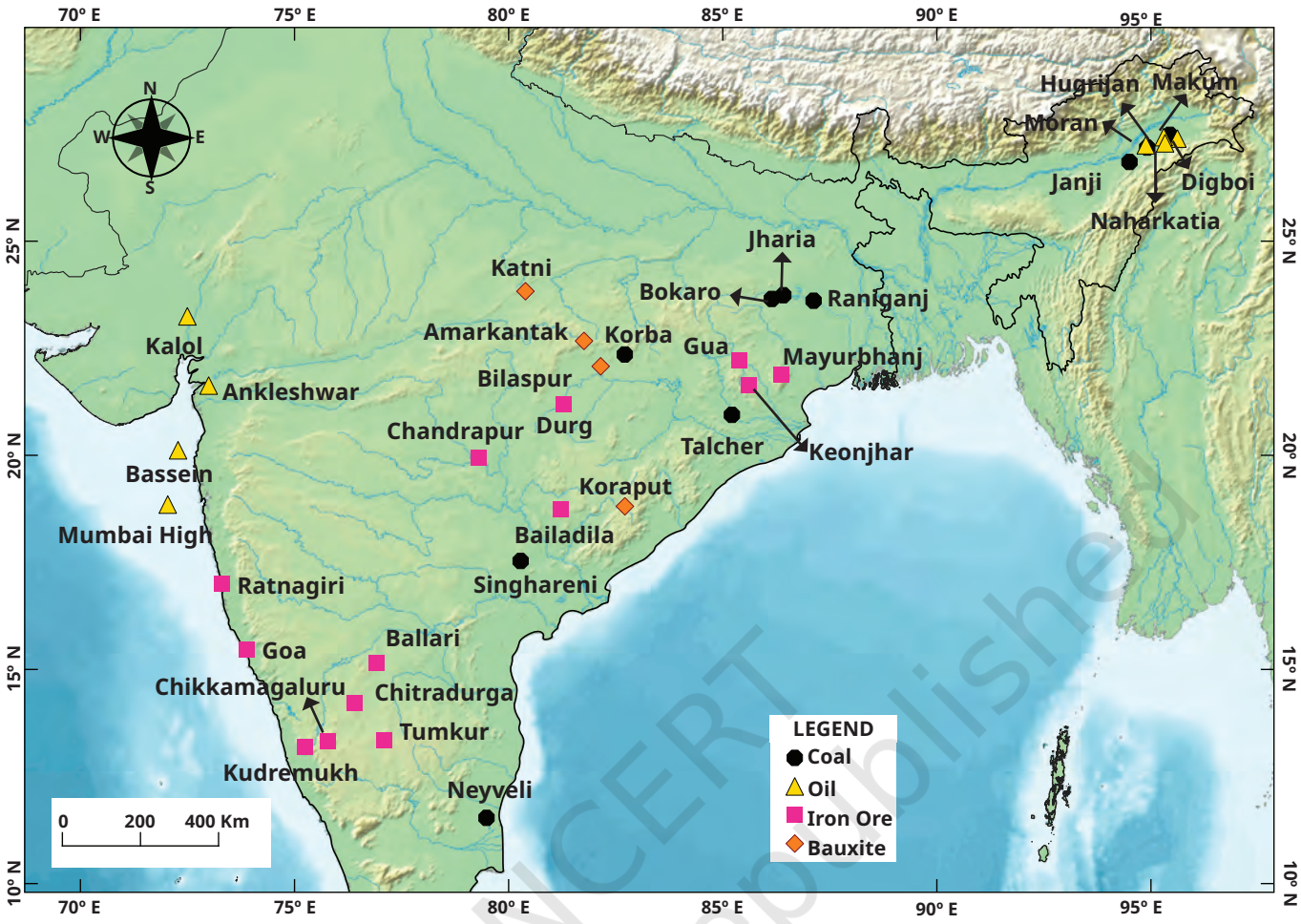

Fig. 1.11. Distribution of important minerals

LET'S EXPLORE

Observe the map in Fig.1.11. Notice the uneven distribution of important minerals. What types of resources are available in your region? How are they distributed?

Industries located near natural resources create employment opportunities for the local people. Townships grow around them and expand economic opportunities for others, too. More modern facilities that improve the quality of life become accessible. However, these benefits are often accompanied by costs, in the short term as well as in the long term. We have examples from across the world of people living in resource-rich areas who have been displaced from their homes to facilitate such

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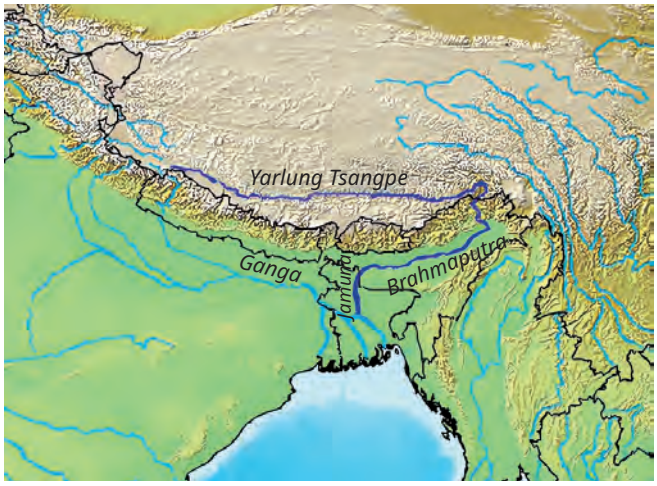

Fig. 1.12. Shared waters of the Brahmaputra river

developments. In some cases their sacred places are under threat, leading to conflicts.

National and international trade depend on the geographical location of natural resources. Combined with human knowledge and skills, these can create unique products like the Wootz steel. As we know, trade fuelled the development of large empires in India.

LET'S EXPLORE

→ Select any two natural resources. Gather information about their availability across different parts of India. Mark them on a map. What do you observe about their distribution? What are the types of economic activities connected with them?

→ Discuss the implications of extracting the natural resources in those parts for current and future generations. Suggest ways in which we can use Nature's gifts in responsible ways.

Nature does not pay attention to political boundaries. This leads to tensions regarding the sharing of natural resources across states as well as countries. One example is the sharing of Kaveri River water among Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry; negotiations and deft management were required to maintain peace and fair sharing. Of course, reaching such agreements between neighbouring countries is not easy.

LET'S EXPLORE

Find out about such a conflict in the international context. Discuss your findings in the class.

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Fig. 1.13. Mettur dam in Tamil Nadu built on the Kaveri river

The 'Natural Resource Curse'

Having abundant natural resources does not guarantee economic prosperity. Some regions rich in natural resources can experience slower economic growth and development — a phenomenon economists call the '**natural resource curse**' or the 'paradox of plenty'. Put very simply, this means that often having plenty of natural resources does not automatically mean that a country is rich. Frequently, economies are unable to develop industries that convert the resources into products of higher value; the chapter 'Factors of Production' in the latter part of this book will give you an understanding of this.

India has generally avoided this curse by investing in the development of such industries to meet our growing needs.

LET'S EXPLORE

What do you think are the different inputs required to enable the use of the natural resources available in different geographical areas?

However, the challenge of balancing resource extraction with sustainability remains. Understanding and managing natural resources is a valuable starting point, but human knowledge, good governance, and strategic planning determine whether they become lasting benefits or temporary windfalls.

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Responsible and Wise Use of Natural Resources: Stewardship

Sustaining life on Earth requires that we respect Nature and use natural resources in a way that enables the restoration and regeneration of renewable resources, and the responsible and judicious use of non-renewable ones.

Biodiversity loss : The decline in the variety of life on Earth

Scientists studying these aspects have warned that the irresponsible treatment of natural resources has led to pollution, **biodiversity loss** and climate change, which has been taking place at an increased pace in recent years.

Restoration and regeneration of renewable resources

Here are two examples of how we are pushing the use of natural resources beyond their capacity to regenerate.

Many farmers in our country extract groundwater for irrigation purposes. In most states, the extraction rate is greater than the rate at which the water table is replenished. Over time, this deficit builds up, leading to higher cost of extraction of groundwater and eventually to its unavailability. It has been predicted that many of our growing cities will run out of groundwater soon. Initiatives to raise groundwater levels have been launched to remedy this. Traditional practices of water harvesting, rejuvenation of ponds and tanks, cutting down on wasteful consumption of water, processing and reusing water are some of the strategies attempted.

Fig. 1.14. Crop failure on account of injudicious use of chemical fertilisers

Similarly, the improper use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides has led to soil degradation. Traditional farming practices considered soil to be part of Mother Earth. Practices like the use of cow dung and other natural fertilisers, mulching, multi-cropping, and so on, enabled holistic soil management. We must learn from these practices and apply

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them in our current situation to prevent further degradation. We need to replenish and rejuvenate our soil.

Overexploitation of groundwater: a caselet from Punjab

A crisis has unfolded in the fertile plains of Punjab where groundwater resources have been severely depleted. Punjab was home to the Green Revolution that fed a large proportion of our population, and contributed to India becoming self-sufficient in food. Today the same state faces issues of sustainability — Nature has been exploited beyond regeneration, at least in the short term. However, this concern is not particular to Punjab; it affects many other states.

In the 1960s, farmers shifted to high-yielding varieties of wheat and paddy. These required more water than the traditional seeds, and farmers began to extract groundwater to meet this need. In addition, the supply of free power led to the over-pumping of groundwater (a situation still prevalent in much of India today). Modern farming techniques also required the use of chemical pesticides and fertilisers.

The combined effect of these factors is that the groundwater level in a large part of Punjab (see fig. 1.17) has become inaccessible till depths of about 30 metres; and the chemicals from the pesticides and fertilisers have dissolved in the groundwater causing health hazards.

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Fig. 1.15. Extraction of groundwater

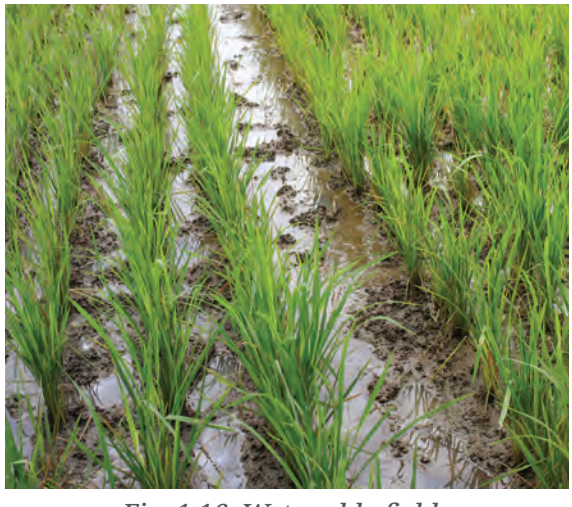

Fig. 1.16. Wet paddy fields

Almost 80% of the area of Punjab has been classified as 'over-exploited'; in other words, we have drawn water at a rate much greater than at which restoration and rejuvenation of groundwater is possible.

We can see that food security was ensured for the short term, but the long-term consequences will take time and effort to heal.

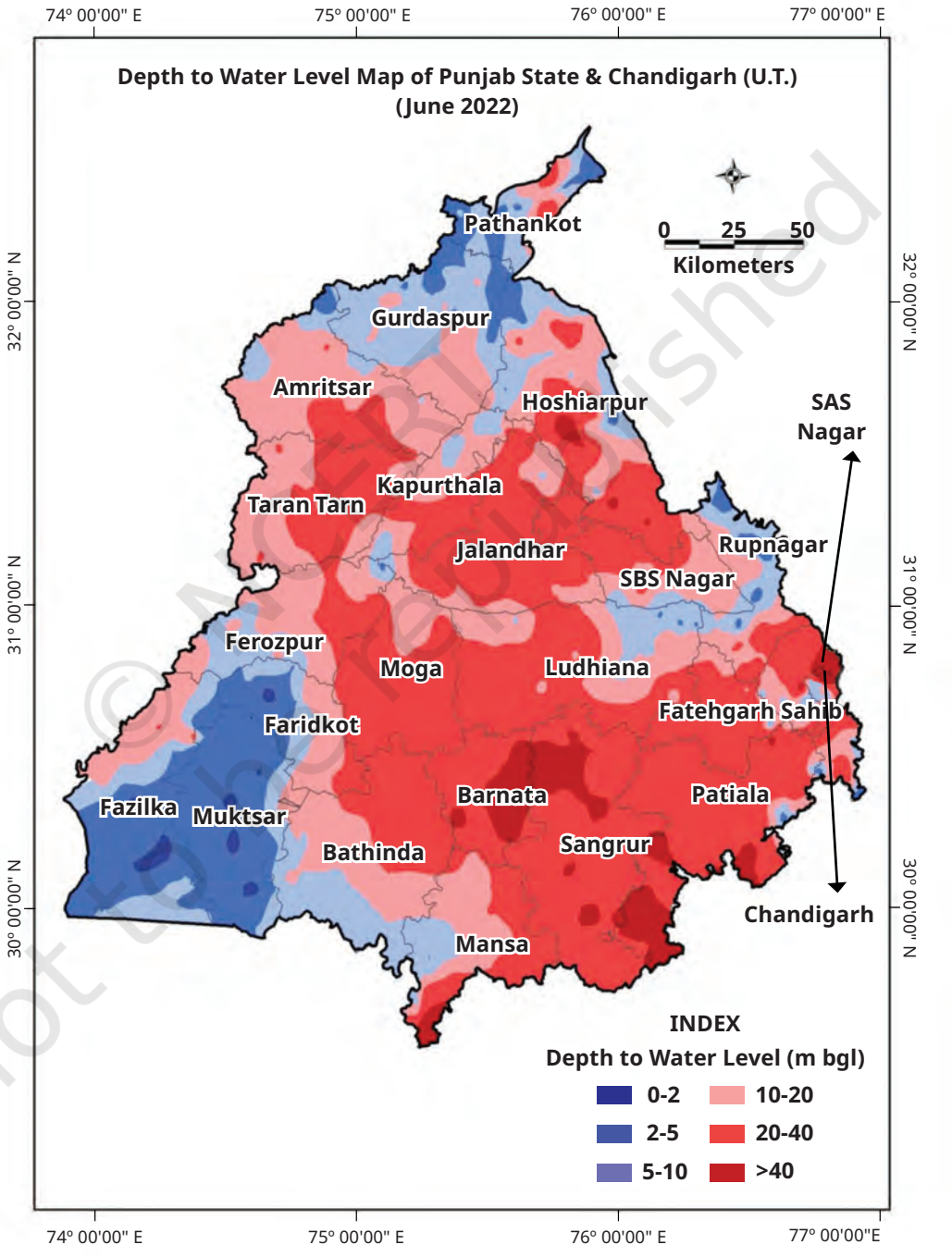

Fig 1.17. Depth to water level map of Punjab and Chandigarh, June 2022 (m bgl = metres below ground level)

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Fig. 1.18. Jaisalmer fort, Rajasthan. A mud structure built in the 12th century and refurbished later using sandstone.

The case of cement

We cannot imagine life without cement. Our houses, schools and hospitals and other buildings, bridges, roads and airports, all require cement. The production of cement has been listed as one of the most polluting industries. The process of production releases fine dust that enters our lungs and those of animals damaging them, settles on leaves of plants decreasing their yields, and causes soil and water pollution too. The Central Pollution Control Board has created guidelines for cement factories to ensure that the pollution is minimised or eliminated.

In addition, there is a move towards creating alternative materials that reduce pollution. These include the use of traditional materials like stone and mud, new plant-based materials and recycled materials from waste plastic.

Fig. 1.19. A community building in Auroville constructed by Auroville Earth Institute (which holds the UNESCO Chair for Earthen Architecture). This modern building is made of mud using special techniques.

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Traditional materials and methods are being combined with modern technological advances to create new materials that are sustainable — the process of production is less polluting, provides local employment, and is designed keeping in mind the climate of the place.

Vṛikṣhāyurveda is an ancient Indian botanical science that focuses on the study and care of plants and trees. The term comes from Sanskrit, with *vṛikṣha* meaning tree and *ayurveda* meaning the science of life or health. This traditional knowledge system dates back several millennia and was formalised in texts such as Surapala's *Vṛikṣhāyurveda* around the 10th century CE.

It has elaborate recommendations on the specific plants to be grown on different soil types, and provides intricate methods for seed collection, preservation, and pre-planting treatments. Irrigation techniques are elaborately described, with recommendations varying according to plant species, growth stage, and seasonal conditions. It specifies pest management strategies through natural repellents and plants that should be grown together. This form of sustainable agriculture promotes practices like crop rotation and mixed cropping to maintain soil health. *Vṛikṣhāyurveda* also offers advice on proper methods of ploughing soil so as to retain soil moisture as well as facilitate the growth of living organisms in the soil like fungi, bacteria and earthworms.

Fig. 1.20. Organic farming in Sikkim

A caselet from Sikkim

Pema's family farm in Sikkim faced declining yields and mounting debts from expensive chemical inputs. When the state government announced a policy to promote organic farming throughout the state, Pema's family decided to try. It was not an easy transition — initially the yields dropped as the soil was recovering from years of chemical use.

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The family switched to compost, prepared natural pest repellents using neem and garlic, and started growing multiple crops across the year. After about five years, Pema's farm was thriving. She was able to sell her cardamom, ginger, and traditional vegetables at premium prices. In 2016, Sikkim became a 100 per cent organic state with all of its farmland certified organic. The effects were transformational — local biodiversity flourished, with beneficial insects and birds returning; tourism increased as visitors came to see the organic farming model, and farmers' incomes grew by 20 per cent on average. Today, Sikkim serves as a global model, demonstrating that an entire region can successfully transition to sustainable agricultural practices while improving both ecological and economic outcomes.

Responsible and judicious use of resources

In the case of non-renewables we need to ensure that we use the resources so that they can last long enough for humanity to find more sustainable alternatives. For example, we need to make the switch to renewable sources of energy for as many purposes as we can.

Fig. 1.21. Satellite image of one of the largest solar parks in the world located in Rajasthan. It can generate enough electricity to power about 15% of the current needs of Rajasthan.

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Fig. 1.22. Solar farm near Raichur, Karnataka

The International Solar Alliance — India's leadership in renewable energy

India and France launched the International Alliance for Solar Energy (IASE) in 2015 — a coalition of sunshine-rich countries committed to harnessing solar power. The alliance focuses on countries blessed with abundant sunlight throughout the year. India has helped channel billions of dollars into solar projects across developing nations, sharing technical expertise and creating affordable financing options. The Bhadla Solar Park is a symbol of India's solar ambitions, demonstrating how a country can transition from traditional energy sources to renewable alternatives. For Indians, this alliance represents both environmental responsibility and economic opportunity.

Even as we deal with these issues we must be mindful that the distribution and access to resources, including basic ones like water and clean air, is often unfair to some sections of society. In cities, many areas do not receive adequate and regular supply of drinking water. Air pollution caused by industries and excessive use of fossil fuels, affects those who are unable to protect themselves from these hazards.

We must remember our relationship with Nature and act as stewards of natural resources toward restoration, regeneration, and sustainability. The Bhagavad Gītā refers to *lokasangraha*,

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the idea that everyone must transcend personal desires and act for the wellbeing of all. Has the time come for us to consider this seriously?

Before we move on ...

- ‘Natural resources’ are materials and substances that occur in Nature and are valuable to humans.
- There are different ways of categorising resources; renewable and non-renewable are useful categories.
- The ‘resource curse’ can be overcome through investments in the development of technology and skills.
- We need to become vigilant about the rate at which we use renewables so as not to overexploit them; judicious and wise use of non-renewables will enable stretching their use for a longer period of time.

Questions and activities

1. What can make what is today a renewable resource non-renewable tomorrow? Describe some actions that can prevent this from happening.
2. Name five ecosystem functions that serve humans.
3. What are renewable resources? How are they different from non-renewable ones? What can people do to ensure that renewable resources continue to be available for our use and that of future generations? Give two examples.
4. Identify cultural practices in your home and neighbourhood that point to mindfulness in the use of natural resources.
5. What are some considerations to keep in mind in the production of goods for our current use?

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A NOTE ON HISTORY'S DARKER PERIODS

History sometimes seems to be full of wars and destruction; it is true that it rarely focuses on periods when the society is, on the whole, harmonious and peaceful. But while every country may have had such peaceful eras and some benevolent rulers, history seems peopled by incompetent, corrupt or cruel rulers. We find them especially in what we may call the darker chapters or periods of history, when war, abuse, fanaticism, bloodshed, etc., suddenly dominate the landscape and inflict suffering and misery on the whole society or country.

The world over, historians have faced this dilemma: how much attention should we draw to such darker periods? Should we omit them entirely? Should we mention them in passing, with most atrocious details left out? Or should we face them and analyse them so as to understand what made such developments possible and, hopefully, help avoid their recurrence in future? The third option is, in our opinion, the best, if it can be done with enough detachment and sensitivity; it is important to know our past, pleasant or unpleasant, since the past continues to live with us and shapes the present.

What do we mean by 'detachment and sensitivity'? Simply that it is important to study those darker developments dispassionately, without blaming anyone living today for them. For instance, you will learn later that World War II (1939–1945) resulted in millions of deaths worldwide; Germany then followed a cruel ideology (known as 'Nazism') which believed in the extermination of 'inferior races' and resulted in the inhuman treatment of some ethnic groups and a brutal rule of occupied nations. Yet it would be clearly unacceptable to blame today's Germans for what happened over eight decades ago. Rather, what matters is to understand what made the Nazi ideology possible, so that similar ideologies today or tomorrow may be defeated.

The same principle applies to the 'Tapestry of the Past' chapters in this textbook, which include passages on warfare and instances of cruelty or brutality. While those happenings cannot be erased or denied, it would be wrong to hold anyone today responsible for them. Understanding the historical origin of cruel violence, abusive misrule or misplaced ambitions of power is the best way to heal the past and build a future where, hopefully, they will have no place.

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CHAPTER 2

Reshaping India's Political Map

Fig. 2.1. An aerial view of the Qutub Minar complex, Delhi

The Big Questions

1. *How did foreign invasions and the rise of new dynasties reshape India's political boundaries during this period?*
2. *How did Indian society respond to invasions? How did India's economy adapt during times of political instability?*
3. *What impact did this period have on the lives of the people?*

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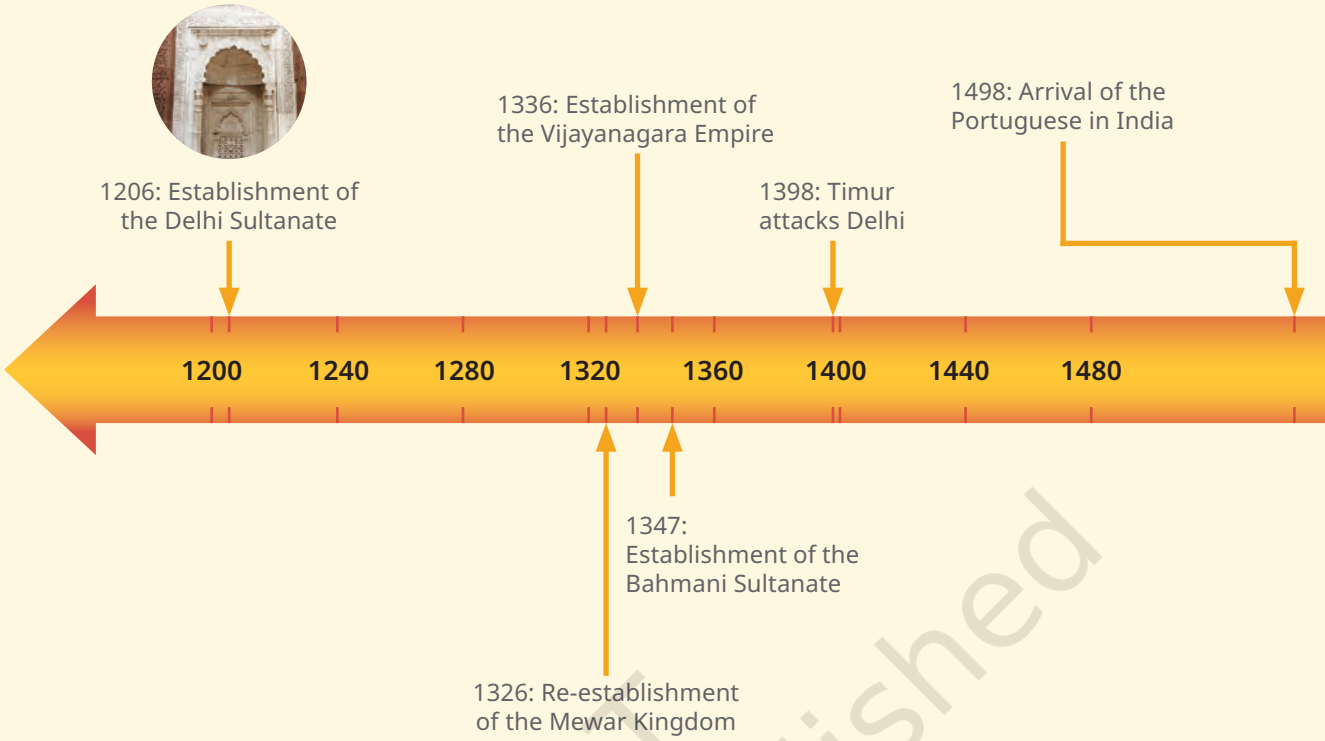

Fig. 2.2.

The period in this chapter and the next is often called the latter part of the '**medieval period**' of Indian history. The term 'medieval' (i.e., 'between two ages') was originally applied to European history, roughly from the fall of the Roman Empire (5th century CE) to the Renaissance (Europe's cultural revival in the 14th–16th centuries, nurtured by the rediscovery of Greek and Roman art and literature). It was once thought to mark a dark age before the development of modern science; but, of course, Europe's and India's histories are very different, so applying the same term 'medieval' to both is not ideal, and historians do not always agree on which period it covers in India. We will sometimes have to use the term 'medieval' but for us it simply means the period from the 11th to the 17th centuries.

In 'Tapestry of the Past' chapters, we have tried to keep as few dates as possible — only those that mark important reference points. You will find it helpful to keep revisiting the timelines in those chapters. Revisit the maps too, as they will help you visualise the geography that was traversed by armies, common people, traders, scholars or spiritual figures.

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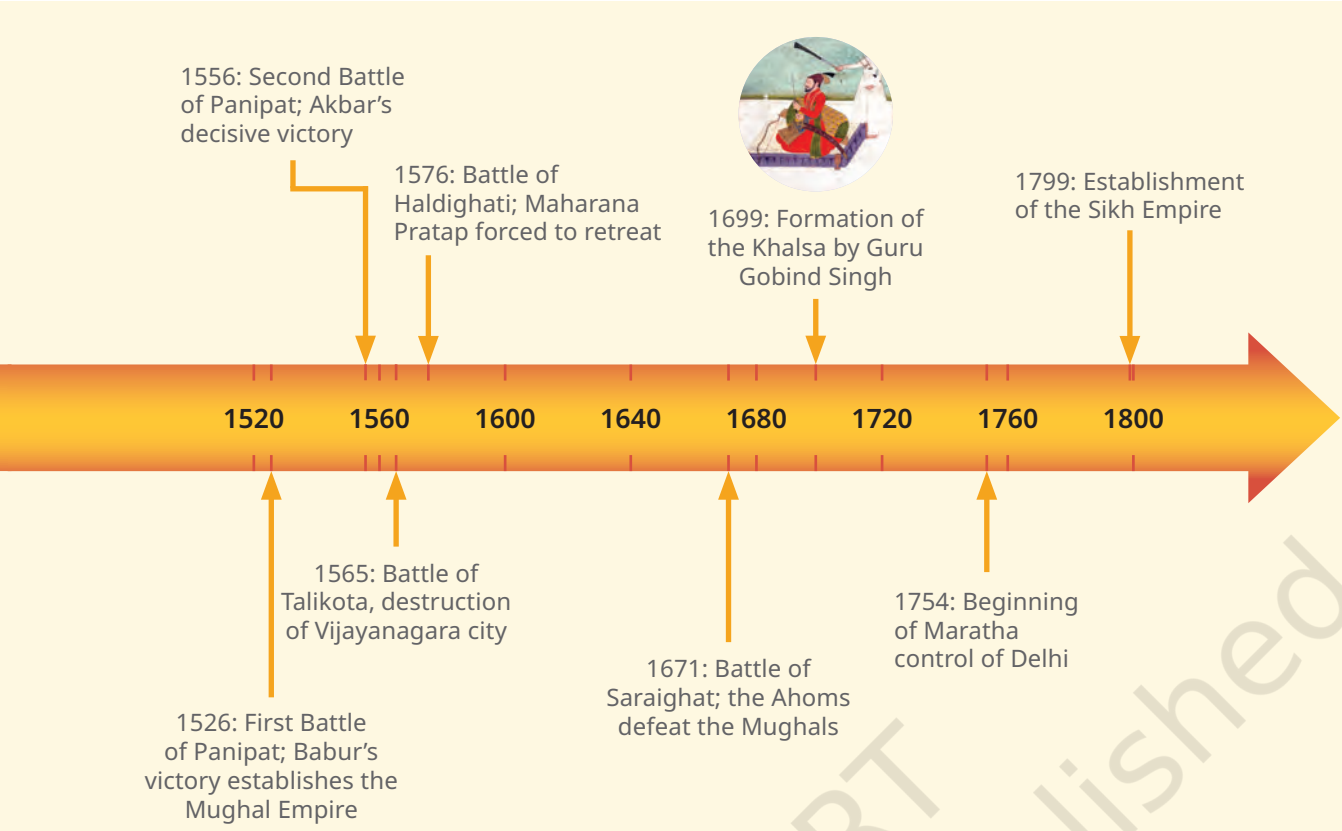

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Spellings, spellings ...

Because of difficulties in transcribing the Persian script in the Roman script, you will find some alternative spellings in parentheses here and there. For instance, 'Khalji' or 'Khilji' are the same. Similarly, we use here the now standard spelling of 'Mughal' spelling, but alternatives such as 'Mughul' or 'Moghul' are still sometimes used.

A new era in India's journey began in the early 11th century. Invasions from beyond the Hindu Kush mountains reshaped India's political map. No doubt, India had seen much warfare in earlier periods, but the spate of invasions by people from outside the Indian subcontinent during this period was unprecedented. Many of these invaders were Central Asian — **Turkic** or Afghan. They were drawn to India not only for her reputed riches and for territorial ambitions, but also often to spread, by force of violence if necessary, their own versions of their religion.

Let us now explore in this chapter the ever-changing landscape of India from the 13th century onward.

Turkic: Refers to peoples, languages, and cultures historically associated with a vast region stretching across Central Asia, all the way to Turkey and Siberia.

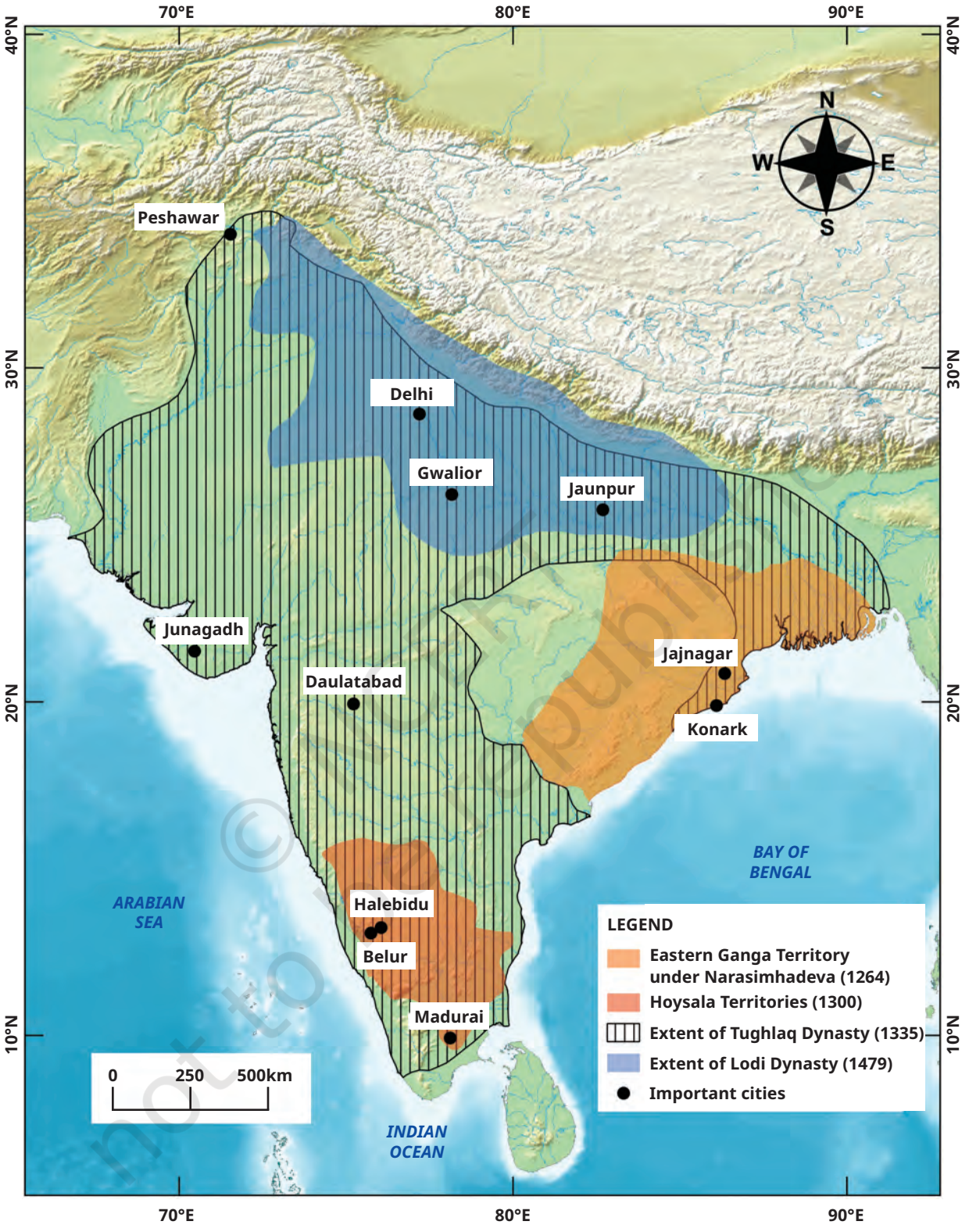

Fig. 2.3. A comparison of the territories under the Tughlaqs and the Lodis (13th to 15th centuries), and regional powers in the south and east.

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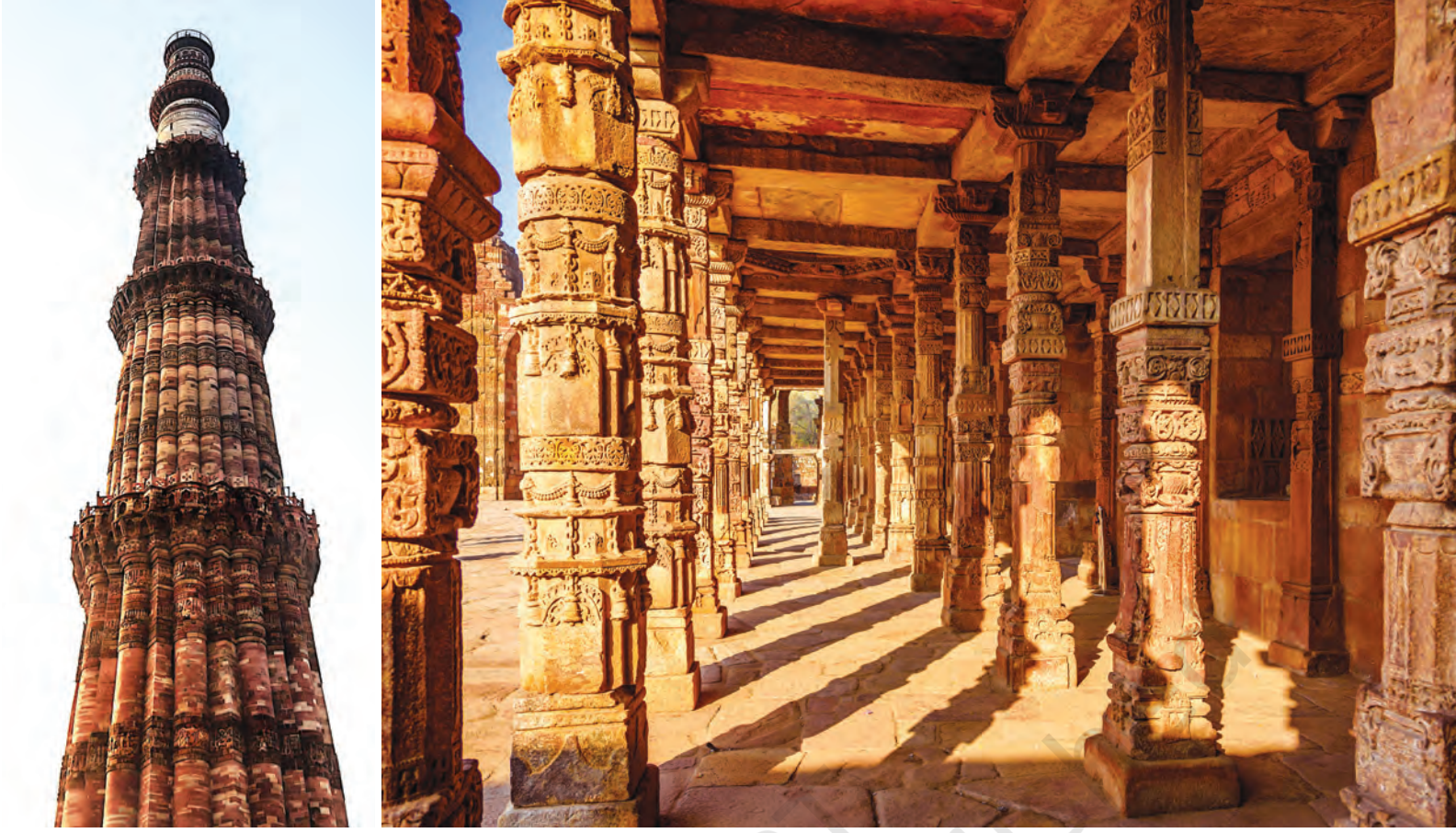

Fig. 2.4. The Qutub Minar. Fig. 2.5. A section of the Quwwat-ul-Islam ('Might of Islam') mosque in Delhi's Qutub Minar complex; its construction began in Qutub-ud-din Aibak's time (early 13th century) and was completed by later sultans. An inscription states that materials from 27 destroyed Hindu and Jain temples were used in the construction, some of which can be seen here.

Rise and Fall of the Delhi Sultanate

We begin our journey here with the Delhi **Sultanate**, formed after the defeat in 1192 of King Prithviraj Chauhan, who ruled over parts of northwestern India. This Sultanate saw the rule of five successive foreign dynasties of Turkic-Afghan origin — the Mamluks (or 'Slave dynasty'), the Khiljis (or Khaljis), the Tughlaqs, the Sayyids, and the Lodis (or Lodhis). While certain parts of northern India came under the control of the Delhi Sultanate, neighbouring kingdoms, such as the Eastern Gangas in the east and the Hoysalas in the south resisted its advance (Fig. 2.3) and also emerged as thriving centres of art, culture, and administration. The city of Delhi also assumed a bigger role in the political landscape of northern India.

Sultanate: A territory ruled by a 'Sultan' — a title that some Muslim rulers adopted.

The Sultanate period was marked by political instability combined with efforts at territorial expansion. This resulted in military campaigns that raided villages and cities, and plundered

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Fig. 2.6. A coin minted by Ala-ud-din Khilji, which bears the inscription 'Sikander Sani' or 'the second Alexander' in Persian.

and destroyed temples and seats of learning. Successions (the appointments of new sultans) were often violent: almost two sultans out of three seized power by eliminating their predecessor, so that a sultan's average reign was hardly more than nine years!

LET'S EXPLORE

Looking at Fig. 2.6, why do you think Ala-ud-din Khilji called himself 'the second Alexander'?

At the turn of the 14th century, **Ala-ud-din Khilji** conducted military campaigns over large areas of north and central India, sacking and plundering many cities; at the same time, he also repelled several invasions by Mongol forces, who were trying to add India to the vast Mongol Empire (it covered most of Asia at the time).

His slave-general Malik Kafur expanded the Sultanate's reach southward, conquering several kingdoms on the way; their plundered wealth helped finance the Sultanate's enormous military apparatus. He also attacked a number of Hindu centres such as Srirangam, Madurai, Chidambaram, and possibly Rameswaram.

LET US EXPLORE

What kind of resources do you think were needed to maintain an army and wage war in those days? Discuss in groups the various types of expenditure involved, from weapons or food for soldiers to animals used in warfare, road construction, etc.

A few decades later, **Muhammad bin Tughlaq** (or 'Tughluq') ruled Delhi and expanded the Delhi Sultanate's territories further. For the first time since the Mauryan Empire, most of

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the Subcontinent was now under one ruler. Although this dominance was significant, it proved to be short-lived. Muhammad bin Tughlaq had ambitious schemes, but they were often poorly executed. One such was moving his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad (then called 'Devagiri', near present-day Sambhaji Nagar); perhaps he thought its more central location would offer better control of the empire. The people were forced to travel over 1,000 km, and a few years later, as his plan misfired, he shifted the capital back to Delhi; both transfers resulted in great loss of life according to some sources. Another instance was the introduction of 'token currency', where cheap copper coins were declared to be tokens and have the value of silver or gold coins — although this was a progressive idea (most of our currency today is actually 'token'), at the time this created confusion in the trade and encouraged people to counterfeit copper coins, all of which caused the economy to decline.

Fig. 2.7. A 19th-century painting depicting Muhammad bin Tughlaq in his court

The sultans and their court elite lived in luxurious palaces, enjoying elaborate clothing, jewelled ornaments and fine food. This wealth was largely derived from plunder from their military campaigns, taxes levied on common people and conquered regions, and engagement in slave trade (as enslaved people

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Iconoclasm: The rejection or destruction of icons or religious images considered idolatrous.

provided free labour or were sent away to distant Central Asia to be sold). But plunder, in turn, affected trade networks and agricultural production. This period also witnessed numerous attacks on sacred or revered images in Buddhist, Jain and Hindu temples; such destruction was motivated not just by plunder but also by **iconoclasm**.

THINK ABOUT IT

Why do we use the term 'image' rather than common terms like 'idol' or 'icon'? The latter two terms are considered pejorative in the context of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, whose orthodox sects condemn 'idolatry' or the worship of 'idols' or 'icons'.

India's classical texts used words like *mūrti, vigraha, pratimā, rūpa,* etc., to designate images, often statues, used for worship in temples or homes. In English, 'image' is a neutral term.

Infidel: Literally, someone who does not share the faith (of a given religion). For medieval Christianity, infidels were Muslims or Pagans; for medieval Islam, infidels were Christians or, in the context of India, Hindus, Buddhists or Jains.

Some of the sultans also imposed the *jizya*, a tax on non-Muslim subjects to grant them protection and exemption from military service. In practice, depending on the ruler, this discriminatory tax would be a source of economic burden and public humiliation, and formed a financial and social incentive for subjects to convert to Islam. At the end of the 14th century, Timur, a brutal Turkic-Mongol conqueror from central Asia, invaded northwest India and launched a devastating attack on Delhi, then a thriving city. As he wrote in his memoirs, his two-fold objective was to wage "war with the **infidels** and to gain something by plundering the wealth of the infidels." Large numbers were killed or enslaved, and the city was left in ruins. Timur soon withdrew from India with huge plunder, leaving chaos behind. In the aftermath, the Lodis emerged and established the last dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate. By then, however, its territory had shrunk considerably in the face of increasing resistance from other states and kingdoms from within India (see Fig. 2.3).

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Resistance to the Delhi Sultanate

Throughout its rule, the Delhi Sultanate faced resistance from many quarters. While many kingdoms fell into its net, it failed to subdue the **Eastern Ganga kingdom** (see Fig. 2.3) of Kalinga, which included present-day Odisha and parts of Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. One of its rulers in the mid-13th century, Narasimhadeva I (also spelt Narasingha Deva I), was noted for the military strength and cultural brilliance he brought to the kingdom. Apart from repelling multiple inroads of the Sultanate, he defeated the Delhi Sultanate's governor of Bengal. Partly to commemorate these victories, he built the famed Sūrya temple at Konark (present-day Odisha).

Fig. 2.8. A statue depicting Narasimhadeva I seated on his throne, surrounded by attendants and musicians.

THINK ABOUT IT

During the time of the Tughlaqs, the Musunuri Nayakas, Telugu chieftains, rallied over 75 more chieftains of the region, formed a confederacy that defeated smaller provinces, formed a confederacy that defeated the Delhi Sultanate forces, and expelled Muhammad bin Tughlaq's army from Warangal (present-day Telangana) around 1330-1336. Do you think it would have been an easy task to bring together 75 leaders in those days?

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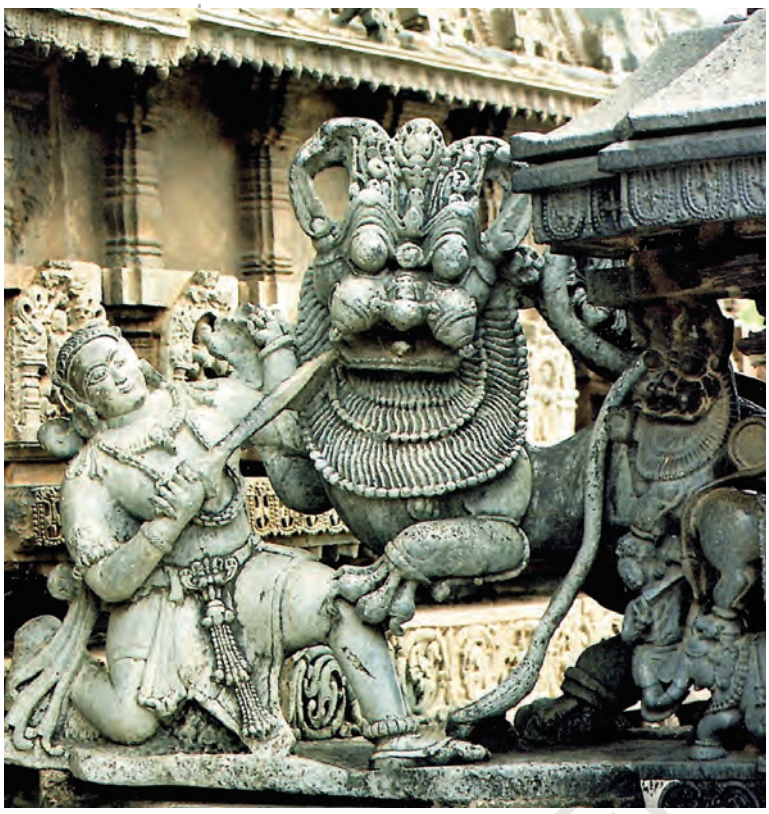

Fig. 2.9 The Hoysalas built magnificent temples, for instance those of Belur (this picture) and Halebidu.

We mentioned earlier Ala-ud-din's push to the South, attracted by its renowned wealth. At the time, the **Hoysalas** ruled parts of southern India (mostly present-day Karnataka, see Fig. 2.3) and fended off several attacks from the Delhi Sultanate, remaining the only independent kingdom in the south. However, weakened by these attacks and internal conflicts, the Hoysala kingdom declined and, in the mid-14th century, was absorbed into the Vijayanagara Empire further south (see below).

DON'T MISS OUT

The sculpture in Fig. 2.9 narrates the story behind the Hoysalas' emblem. Kannada folklore recounts the story of Sala, a young man who fought a lion to save his guru, giving the dynasty its name — 'Hoy (strike)! Sala'.

The Delhi Sultanate also faced rebellions from the emergence of several independent regional Sultanates. The **Bahmani Sultanate**, for instance, rose in the mid-14th century and controlled much of the Deccan for a while. Powerful Sultanates also emerged in Gujarat, Bengal and other regions, leading to a complex interplay of alliances — and frequent wars. Parts of Rajasthan also remained beyond the reach of the Delhi Sultanate; in the 15th century, it faced stiff resistance from **Rana Kumbha**, the ruler of the Mewar kingdom, who also successfully repelled invasions from these later sultanates.

Rana: A title often used for Rajput kings

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Fig. 2.10. A view of the Kumbhalgarh Fort in the Aravalli hills

DON'T MISS OUT

Kumbhalgarh Fort (Fig. 2.10) was built by Rana Kumbha in the 15th century in the Aravalli hills and served as a stronghold for the rulers of Mewar, a prominent Rajput kingdom (in the central and southern parts of today's Rajasthan). Surrounded by forests and steep slopes, it is famous for its massive 36-kilometre-long wall, one of the longest continuous walls in the world.

LET'S EXPLORE

Why do you think such locations were chosen for many of the medieval forts? Discuss pros and cons. *(Hint: think of issues of strategy, security, vulnerability, etc.)*

The Vijayanagara Empire

While the Delhi Sultanate grew politically more unstable, a new centre of power emerged in the south. In the 14th century, two brothers, Harihara and Bukka, who had initially served as governors under Muhammad bin Tughlaq, eventually rejected Delhi's authority, and established an independent kingdom that became a significant force in southern India and grew into the Vijayanagara Empire.

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Fig. 2.11. A section of the ruins of Vijayanagara city (present-day Hampi). The large building is the Virūpākṣha temple.

DON'T MISS OUT

According to popular folklore, Harihara and Bukka witnessed a remarkable sight at Hampi (in present-day Karnataka) — a hare turning around and chasing a pack of hounds, symbolising unexpected strength and courage. When they recounted this incident to their guru, Vidyaranya, he interpreted it as a symbol of resilience and bravery, and advised them to establish their capital at that very spot.

To the north of the Vijayanagara Empire (see Fig. 2.12), the Bahmani Sultanate was a major rival; it eventually fragmented into five independent states called the 'Deccan Sultanates' — Bijapur, Golconda, Berar, Ahmednagar, and Bidar — each ruled by former governors or *tarafdars* who declared autonomy. The Vijayanagara rulers battled with the first two, as well as with the Gajapati rulers of Odisha in the east.

THINK ABOUT IT

Have you noticed the term *pati* in titles like 'Gajapati'? *Pati* means 'lord' or 'master' and was commonly used by many ruling dynasties of this period to signify power and stature. The Vijayanagara kings were called 'Narapati', the Bahmani Sultanate rulers 'Ashwapati', and the Maratha rulers 'Chhatrapati' — each title reflecting different aspects of kingship and power. Can you guess what these three terms might mean?

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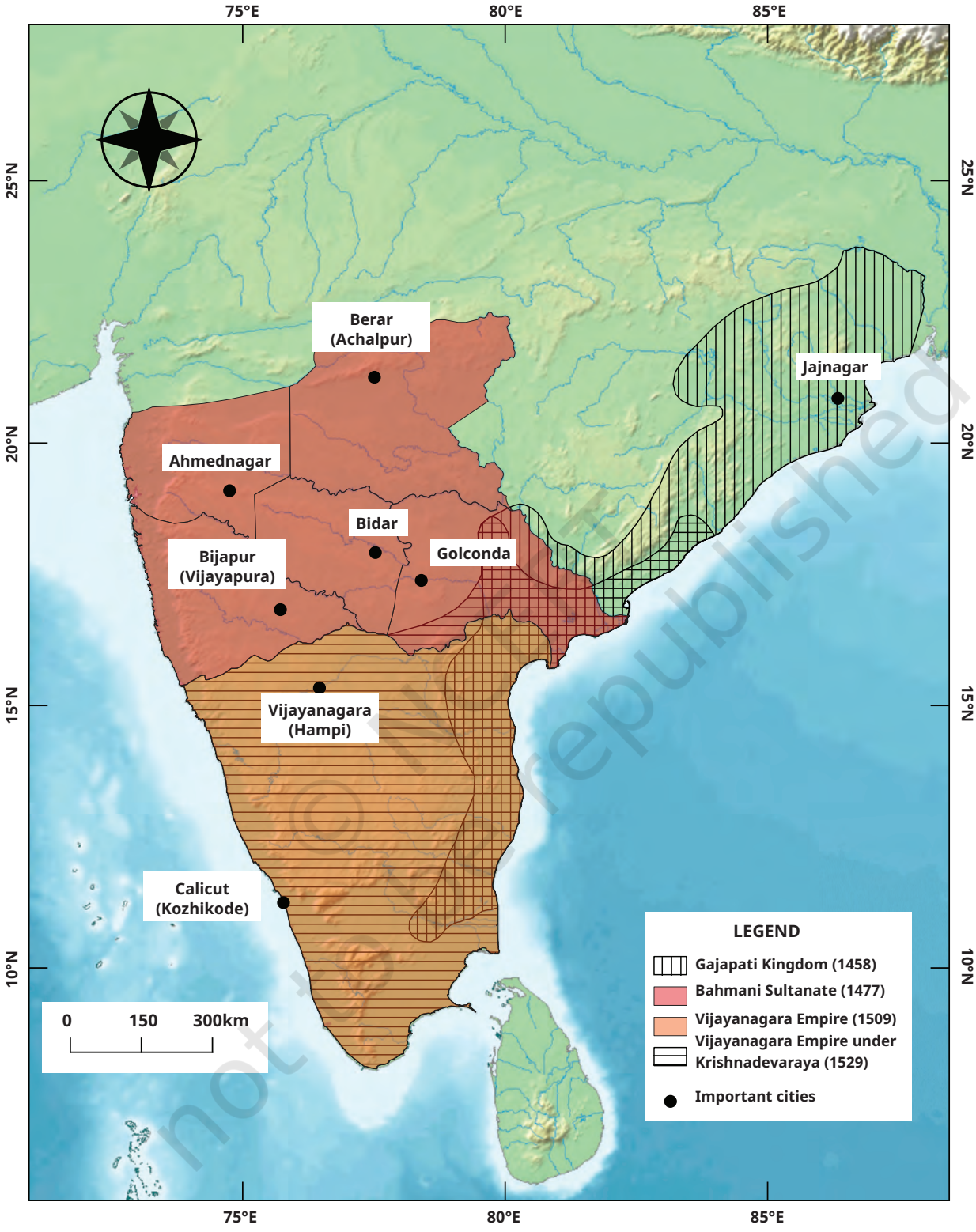

Fig. 2.12. Kingdoms in the Deccan and the Vijayanagara Empire

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Krishnadevaraya

In the 16th century, the Vijayanagara Empire reached its peak under its celebrated ruler, **Krishnadevaraya**, who expanded and secured the empire's dominance over the Deccan. Under his rule, the empire achieved both military power and cultural renaissance. He patronised poets and scholars in Sanskrit, Telugu and Kannada; he himself composed an epic poem in Telugu, *Āmuktamālyada*, on the story of the Tamil poet-saint Āṇḍāl; one section of the work is a *Rājanīti* ('royal policy') where he expounded his ideas of good governance. Krishnadevaraya provided grants to many temples, including Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh and the Vitthala temple in his own capital Vijayanagara, which displayed many grand temples, palaces and other buildings.

Fig. 2.13. The mahāmandapa (great hall) of the Vitthala temple; note the grandeur and intricacy of the architecture, in particular the finely sculpted monolithic pillars; when struck, their smaller columns give out different musical notes — hence their name 'musical pillars'!

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DON'T MISS OUT

Foreign travellers visited Vijayanagara for trade. Portuguese travellers, in particular, were very well treated, as they came to sell horses and the king did not want them to go and sell those precious horses to enemy kingdoms!

One of them, Domingo Paes, left a long and detailed record of his stay in the Vijayanagara capital. An excerpt: "This city ... seemed to me as large as Rome, and very beautiful to the sight; there are many groves of trees within it, in the gardens of the houses, and many conduits of water which flow into the midst of it, and in places there are lakes... The people in this city are countless in number... This is the best provided city in the world... The streets and markets are full of laden oxen ... you could find in great abundance everything that you wanted."

Fig. 2.14. A panel from the Vitthala temple

LET'S EXPLORE

In Fig. 2.14, what elements do you observe? What do they tell you about life then? *(Hint: observe the weapons, the animals, the activities.)*

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After winning many wars against his neighbours, Krishnadevaraya died of illness in 1529. In 1565, the Deccan Sultanates formed a coalition and defeated the Vijayanagara forces led by Ramaraya, Krishnadevaraya's son-in-law, at the Battle of Talikota. The city was sacked over several months; houses, shops, buildings, palaces and most of its temples were destroyed, and much of its civilian population massacred; it was left in ruins. After this, the empire got fragmented into smaller regions ruled by Nayakas, who were former military governors; the empire came to an end in the mid-17th century.

The Mughals

While the Delhi Sultanate weakened, **Babur**, a Turkic-Mongol ruler and military strategist who, having been thrown out of Samarkand (modern-day Uzbekistan), turned his sights to India. A descendant of Timur, Babur defeated Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat in 1526, which will later be called the 'First Battle of Panipat'; it relied heavily on gunpowder, field artillery, and matchlock guns, which had recently been introduced in warfare in India. That defeat put a final end to the Delhi Sultanate and laid the foundation of the **Mughal Empire**, as Babur assumed control of the Delhi throne.

Fig. 2.15. The battle of Panipat as depicted in a copy of the Baburnama. Note the use of cannons.

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Babur and India

Babur left a candid autobiography of great historical value, *Baburnama* ('Babur's Memoirs'). In it, he comes out as cultured and intellectually curious, with a keen appreciation for architecture, poetry, animals (birds in particular, many of which he lists in some detail) and flora (fruit trees especially). But he was also a brutal and ruthless conqueror, slaughtering entire populations of cities, enslaving women and children, and taking pride in erecting 'towers of skulls' made from the slaughtered people of plundered cities.

Babur was nostalgic about Central Asia and found India to be a 'country of few charms'; at the same time, he acknowledged, "Hindustan is a large country and has masses of gold and silver. ... Through the rainy season, the air is remarkably fine, not to be surpassed for healthiness and charm. ... There are countless artisans and workmen of every sort in Hindustan." Perhaps for the last reasons, especially India's wealth, he decided to stay and build his empire in India rather than return to Central Asia.

THINK ABOUT IT

What strikes you in Babur's impressions of India? Discuss in groups.

After Babur's death in 1530, his son **Humayun** struggled to hold the empire together. Taking advantage of this, Sher Shah Suri, a powerful Afghan leader, established the Sur Empire over large parts of north India and introduced many lasting reforms; the empire was short-lived, however, as Humayun soon reconquered the lost ground.

Before this happened, **Himu** (or Hemu), a skilled military commander and chief minister ('wazir') under one of the last Suri rulers, captured Delhi and ruled it briefly under the royal name of Hemchandra Vikramaditya. Though enjoying some military successes, he was injured on the battlefield (the Second Battle of Panipat) when confronted by Babur's grandson, **Akbar**. Captured, Himu was brought to Akbar, who had him beheaded. Akbar soon reclaimed Delhi for the Mughals.

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Akbar

Declared emperor at the age of 13 upon his father Humayun's accidental death, Akbar set out to bring the entire Subcontinent under Mughal control; his reign was a blend of brutality and tolerance, shaped by ambition and strategy.

In early conquests, following many of his predecessors' examples, he showed no mercy at the fort Chittor (or Chittorgarh, in Rajasthan), which he besieged for more than five months in the face of determined resistance from the Rajput soldiers. They inflicted heavy losses on the Mughal army, but, the fort finally breached, died fighting in large numbers, while hundreds of women committed *jauhar* (see box). Akbar ordered the massacre of some 30,000 civilians, and the surviving women and children were enslaved. Akbar was 25 at the time, and he sent a message of victory which read, "We have succeeded in occupying a number of forts and towns belonging to the infidels and have established Islam there. With the help of our bloodthirsty sword, we have erased the signs of infidelity from their minds and have destroyed temples in those places and also all over Hindustan."

What is jauhar?

When invading Turkic or Mughal armies conquered a territory, they often took the women as slaves or abused them. There are historical examples of Rajput women jumping into mass fires to avoid being captured and enslaved; this *jauhar* was considered a heroic act of final resistance and a means of preserving one's honour. Thus, when Akbar finally broke into the Chittorgarh Fort, hundreds of Rajput women, led by their queens and noblewomen, committed *jauhar*.

Akbar followed his predecessors in this thought of his: "A monarch should be ever intent on conquest, otherwise his enemies rise in arms against him." As his empire grew (Fig. 2.16), he increasingly used political strategies to stabilise it; he entered into marriage alliances with princesses of neighbouring kingdoms, welcomed Rajput and regional leaders into his court, abolished the *jizya*, and promoted the doctrine of *sulh-i-kul* — literally, 'peace with all' or tolerance of all faiths. Through interfaith dialogues, appointment

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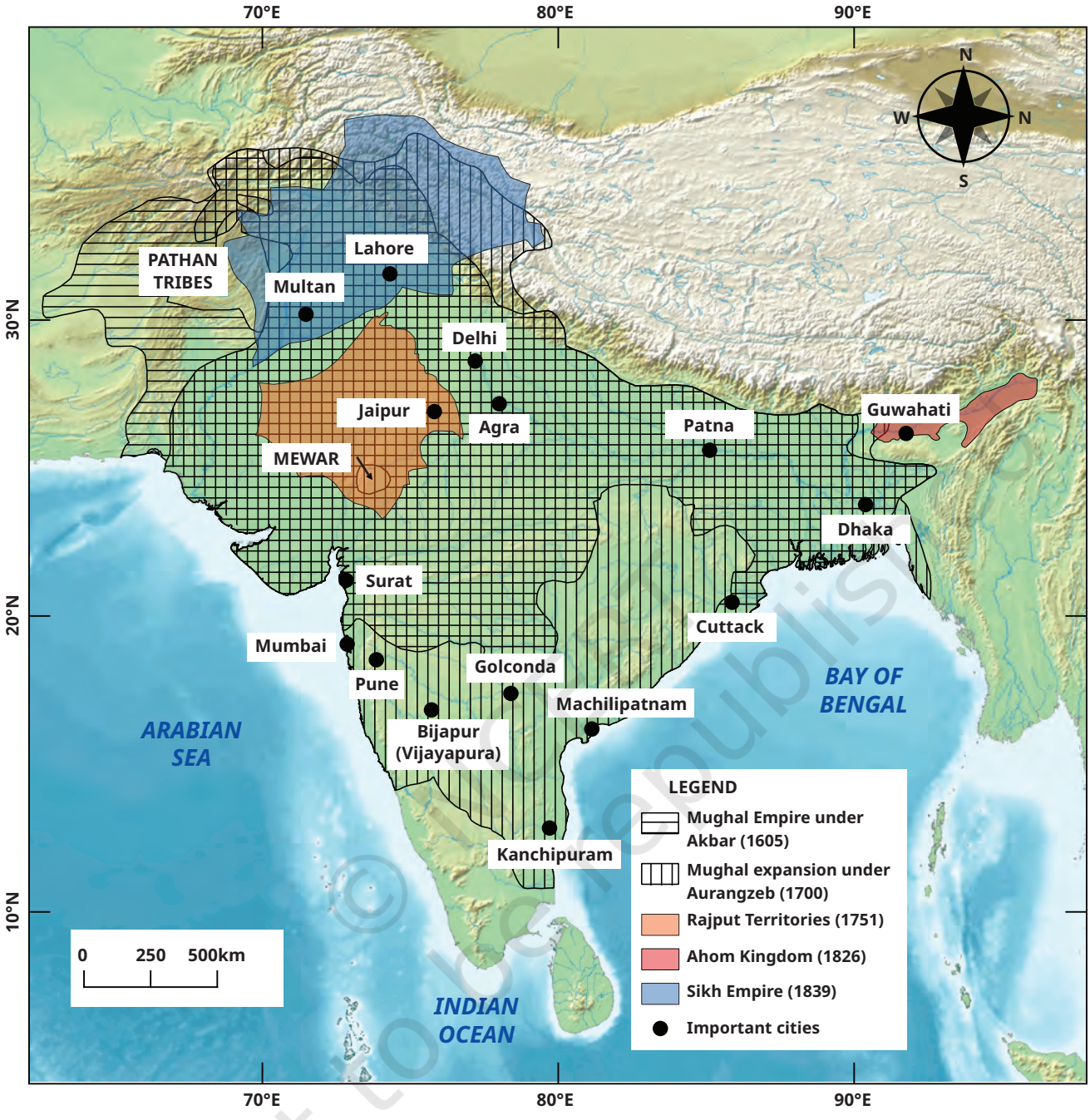

Fig. 2.16. The Mughals and the rise of regional powers at different periods.

of Hindu officials in high positions and other bold reforms, Akbar expanded and stabilised his empire, even gaining the support of many Rajput rulers. His court historian and biographer Abul Fazl recorded him as stating, "Formerly I persecuted men into conformity with my faith and deemed it Islam.

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As I grew in knowledge, I was overwhelmed with shame. Not being a Muslim myself, it was unmeet [i.e., inappropriate] to force others to become such. What constancy is to be expected from proselytes [i.e., converted people] on compulsion?"

His long reign lasted almost 50 years (1556 to his death in 1605); while its middle period was relatively peaceful, the final 15 years involved fresh military campaigns in Kashmir, Sindh, the Deccan, and Afghanistan.

Fig. 2.17. Painting showing Akbar in his court receiving scholars, including two Jesuits (dressed in black).

THINK ABOUT IT

Why do you think Akbar employed different strategies to expand his empire, while the earlier rulers of Delhi relied mostly on military might?

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LET'S EXPLORE

Compare the maps in Figs. 2.3, 2.12 and 2.16. What differences do you notice? What is the 'reshaping' that has occurred?

Fig. 2.18. The five-storied 'Panch Mahal' at Fatehpur Sikri, a city built by Akbar near present-day Agra

Despite being illiterate, Akbar became keen to explore Persian and Indian texts, and showed great interest in classical Indian thought and often invited scholars to his court (Fig. 2.17). He established a 'house of translation' at Fatehpur Sikri where he had major Sanskrit texts translated into Persian, including the Mahābhārata (*Razmnama* in Persian, or the 'Book of War'), the Rāmāyaṇa (with 176 beautiful miniature paintings), the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the *Pañchatantra*.

Akbar's son **Jahangir** shared with his father a love for art and architecture and tried to expand the empire into the Deccan. His son **Shah Jahan** fought several rebellions and is best remembered

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as the builder of the Taj Mahal at Agra. The Taj Mahal is even today recognized as one of the great architectural marvels of the world. This period formed the peak of an immense flowering of art and architecture, which included the building of Humayun's tomb in Delhi and the Red Forts in Delhi and Agra. Other classical arts and music of India also flourished during this period, as also remarkable works of calligraphy and miniature painting.

Fig. 2.19. A miniature painting illustrating the Persian translation of the Rāmāyaṇa and depicting the well-known episode of Rāma chasing the golden deer.

Aurangzeb

We mentioned earlier the frequent violent successions during the Sultanate period; this was repeated during the succession of Shah Jahan, who fell ill in 1657. He wished the throne to go to **Dara Shikoh**, his eldest son, but Dara's younger brother

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Aurangzeb defeated him in a series of battles and eventually executed him, presenting his severed head to their father. Aurangzeb also removed his two other brothers — he had one arrested and executed, and drove the second into exile. To prevent further challenge to his rule, Aurangzeb imprisoned his father Shah Jahan in the Agra Fort, where he remained until his death. Aurangzeb crowned himself emperor in 1658 and named himself 'Alamgir' or 'conqueror of the world'; he ruled for almost 49 years.

THINK ABOUT IT

We saw above that Delhi sultans' average reign lasted about nine years. This figure becomes 27 years in the case of Mughal emperors up to Aurangzeb; and 16 years if we consider all Mughal rulers, up to the end of the empire in the 19th century. What do you make of these numbers of years of reign?

Aurangzeb, skilled in military matters, conducted many campaigns, conquering parts of the South in particular. Under his reign the Mughal empire reached its greatest expansion (see Fig. 2.16), though constantly faced with significant rebellions, some of which we will turn to in the next section. Aurangzeb had to spend the last 25 years of his life fighting war after war in the Deccan. Maintaining large armies for those campaigns depleted the empire's treasury and put a great strain on the administration; indeed, this is often considered one of key factors in the rapid decline of Mughal power after Aurangzeb's death in 1707.

Aurangzeb, who belonged to Islam's Sunni sect, was deeply religious; he led an austere life, and, unlike Akbar, observed all religious rituals and occasions. He gradually banned practices he regarded as un-Islamic, such as music and dance in his court, and reimposed the *jizya* tax on non-Muslims as well as a pilgrimage tax on Hindus travelling to their sacred places (both of which had been abolished by Akbar).

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Fig. 2.20. Aurangzeb in court, holding a hawk, with one of his sons standing in front of him (17th-century painting).

Some scholars argue that Aurangzeb's motives were primarily political, that is, to establish and strengthen his empire's dominance; they also give examples of grants and assurances of protection he gave to some temples. While politics did play a part in his decisions, Aurangzeb's own farmans (or firmans, i.e., edicts) make his personal religious motive clear too. In 1669, for instance, he ordered governors of all provinces "to demolish schools and temples of the infidels and put down their teachings and religious practices." Temples at Banaras (present-day Varanasi), Mathura, Somnath, among many others, were destroyed, as well as Jain temples and Sikh gurudwaras. This aspect of Aurangzeb was also visible in his persecution of Muslims of other sects, including Sufis, and of Zoroastrians (the religion of Parsis in India, originally from Persia).

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LET'S EXPLORE

In his last letters to two of his sons, Aurangzeb wrote, "I came alone and am going away alone. I know not who I am and what I have been doing. ... I have not done well for the country and the people, and of the future there is no hope. I was helpless [in life] and I am departing helpless." What do these words tell us about Aurangzeb? How do you feel about them?

THINK ABOUT IT

Some of the invaders and rulers mentioned above committed terrible deeds and atrocities. Many more could have been mentioned. As the 'Note on History's Darker Chapters' on page 20 makes clear, we must keep in mind that this is about people in the past, not people of today. We need to know the facts of the past, and the victims of these atrocities deserve our respect and remembrance. But it is important to keep in mind that we, today, bear no responsibility for actions of individuals hundreds of years ago.

Resistance to the Mughals

Let us survey some of the major rebellions that ended up eroding the Mughal power (keeping the special case of the Marathas for the next chapter).

Over the centuries, many peasant communities rebelled against harsh exploitation. One such case, in the 17th century, involves the **Jat peasantry** (in present-day western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and eastern Rajasthan), who managed to kill an oppressive officer of the Mughal administration. In a subsequent battle, 20,000 men confronted the Mughal army and fought valiantly, but their Jat leader was killed and the rebellion suppressed.

Many tribal groups — the **Bhils**, the **Gond**s, the **Santhals**, the **Kochs**, for instance — also fought back against attempts to annex their territory or impose taxes on them. While some of these groups were subdued or gradually integrated into the

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Delhi Sultanate or the Mughal Empire, others — especially those inhabiting forested, hilly, or remote regions — managed to maintain some degree of independence.

Fig. 2.21. An artist's impression of Rani Durgavati.

Rani Durgavati is remembered as a valiant queen of the Garha kingdom (one of the Gond kingdoms in central India). From all accounts, she ruled wisely and made her kingdom prosperous. She kept an army of 20,000 soldiers and 1,000 elephants, with which she repelled several attempted invasions. When a general sent by Akbar attacked her kingdom in 1564, despite being outnumbered and outmatched in weaponry, she led her troops and fought bravely. Wounded, she took her own life on the battlefield to avoid capture. She was only 40. Her sacrifice became a symbol of regional pride and resistance, and she is still revered as a heroic figure in Indian history.

Surge of the Rajputs

Because of their location in northwest India and the proud traditions they inherited from earlier dynasties (such as the Pratiharas, who had resisted the Arab invasions of Sindh a few centuries earlier), the **Rajputs** were often battling the invading forces from beyond the Subcontinent. They had rebuilt their kingdoms after the Khiljis' conquest, two major clans emerged in this process, in the Mewar and Marwar regions. Inspirational stories of their heroic deeds are still told today, in particular through popular ballads. Among the valorous rulers those clans produced, we met Rana Kumbha earlier. **Rana Sanga** (early 16th

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Fig. 2.23. An artist's impression of the Battle of Haldighati (from Udaipur palace)

century) unified several Rajput clans, won many battles against sultans, ultimately meeting defeat against Babur at the Battle of Khanwa.

Although he inherited a wounded kingdom from his predecessors, Mewar's ruler **Maharana Pratap** refused to accept Mughal suzerainty and became the face of Rajput resistance. A confrontation took place at the Haldighati pass in the Aravallis in 1576 (Fig. 2.23), and although the Mughal army had the upper hand, Maharana Pratap escaped and pursued for years **guerrilla warfare** against the Mughals from the Aravalli hills, living in harsh conditions but firm on his independence. It is noteworthy that Maharana Pratap received strong support from the Bhils, who not only joined his troops as archers but also contributed their knowledge of the terrain; their service (on other occasions too) earned them a respected place in Mewar's military tradition, as the Mewar emblem shows (Fig. 2.22).

Guerrilla warfare: A style of fighting where small groups with knowledge of the terrain carry out surprise attacks and ambushes to defeat bigger armies.

Fig. 2.22. The Mewar emblem, with a Bhil warrior on the left

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While some Rajput states eventually allied with the Mughals — through diplomacy and marriage alliances — some, especially Mewar, did not accept Mughal dominance. During Aurangzeb's reign, several Rajput nobles rebelled, including Durga Das Rathore of Marwar, who fought to protect the independence of Jodhpur. Mughal authority thus remained limited in Rajasthan.

The Ahoms

In the 13th century, the Ahom ethnic group migrated from present-day Myanmar to the Brahmaputra Valley and formed the Ahom kingdom there.

During both the Sultanate and the Mughal periods, the Ahom rulers offered stiff resistance to attempts at expansion into the Northeast. Their unique *paik* system called on every able-bodied man to provide service to the state through labour or military duty in exchange for land rights. This allowed the rulers to create public infrastructure and maintain a large standing force without a permanent army.

Over time, the Ahoms assimilated the local culture, promoted agriculture, encouraged diverse faiths, and contributed to the rich traditions of Assam.

LET'S EXPLORE

Discuss in class how the *paik* system affected the daily lives of the people in the Ahom kingdom, both in terms of challenges and benefits, and helped the king manage both the army and the economy.

In the 17th century, when Aurangzeb sent Mughal forces, briefly capturing the Ahom capital Garhgaon, the Ahoms used their knowledge of the terrain — dense forests, hills and rivers — and persistent guerrilla tactics to repulse the attack, although the latter had more men and a larger fleet of river boats. Notably, in the Battle of Saraighat (1671), fought on the Brahmaputra River near present-day Guwahati, the Ahom military commander Lachit Borphukan and his 10,000 men defeated a Mughal force

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of 30,000 soldiers. Ultimately, the Ahom were able to preserve their independence.

DON'T MISS OUT

Ram Singh, the general of the Mughal army, praised the Ahom warriors in these terms: "Every Assamese soldier is expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches, and in wielding guns and cannons. I have not seen such specimens of versatility in any other part of India."

LET'S EXPLORE

How did the Ahoms use the rivers, hills and forests of Assam to their advantage? Can you think of ways in which the geography helped them build defences and fight wars?

Fig. 2.24. A plaque commemorating the Battle of Saraighat, with an Ahom boat in the foreground (Saraighat War Memorial Park).

Fig. 2.25. Statues depicting Ahom warriors during the Battle of Saraighat.

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The Rise of the Sikhs

In 15th century Punjab, **Guru Nanak** spread the message of equality, compassion, and the oneness of God (*Ik Onkār*); his followers came to be known as Sikhs. Although Sikhism began purely as a spiritual movement, the later Sikh Gurus had to respond to the growing intolerance and persecution under some Mughal rulers. When Emperor Jahangir found out that Guru Arjan had supported his rebellious son, he had **Guru Arjan** tortured to death. This prompted Guru Arjan's son and successor, **Guru Hargobind**, to introduce martial training and form a Sikh army, which fought several battles against the Mughal forces.

DON'T MISS OUT

In the context of this chapter, 'Punjab' refers to the vast region now split across India and Pakistan.

The Sikhs' sacred text, **Guru Granth Sahib**, was first compiled by Guru Arjan; Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns were added later. It stresses that there is one God for all (who "established the earth as a home for Dharma") and enjoins Sikhs to practise truthfulness, compassion, humility and self-control, among other values. An example: "Truth is high but higher still is truthful living."

In 1675, a group of Kashmiri Pandits approached **Guru Tegh Bahadur** seeking protection from religious persecution. The Guru decided to stand with them and court martyrdom; arrested, Aurangzeb ordered him to convert to Islam. Despite torture, and despite witnessing two of his disciples being tortured to death, the Guru refused; on Aurangzeb's orders, he was publicly beheaded in Chandni Chowk, Delhi. In response, his son **Guru Gobind Singh** — the 10th and last Guru — established the **Khalsa** — a martial brotherhood committed to justice, equality and defence of the faith, which frequently clashed with the Mughal forces, at great cost of life.

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Fig. 2.26. Miniature painting of Guru Gobind Singh

DON'T MISS OUT

Do you know what the Gurudwara Sis Gunj Sahib in Chandni Chowk — the famous shopping area in Delhi — signifies? In Sikhism, a gurudwara is a place of worship. This one marks the site where Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, was beheaded by Aurangzeb in 1675. This historic Gurdwara is uniquely honoured by the Sikh Regiment, which has saluted it before the President in the Republic Day parade each year since 1979. It stands as a powerful symbol of faith and sacrifice in Indian history.

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THINK ABOUT IT

- → Why do you think Guru Tegh Bahadur endured torture rather than convert? Why did he think his sacrifice would make a difference?
- → What values did the Sikh Gurus and the Khalsa embody?
- → How are they relevant in today's world?

As the Mughal Empire declined, especially under the onslaughts of the Marathas (see next chapter), several Sikh confederacies emerged in the Punjab region; they were ultimately unified through the efforts of **Maharaja Ranjit Singh** at the turn of the 19th century. Ranjit Singh's military acumen, diplomatic skill and religious tolerance allowed him to establish a strong, centralised

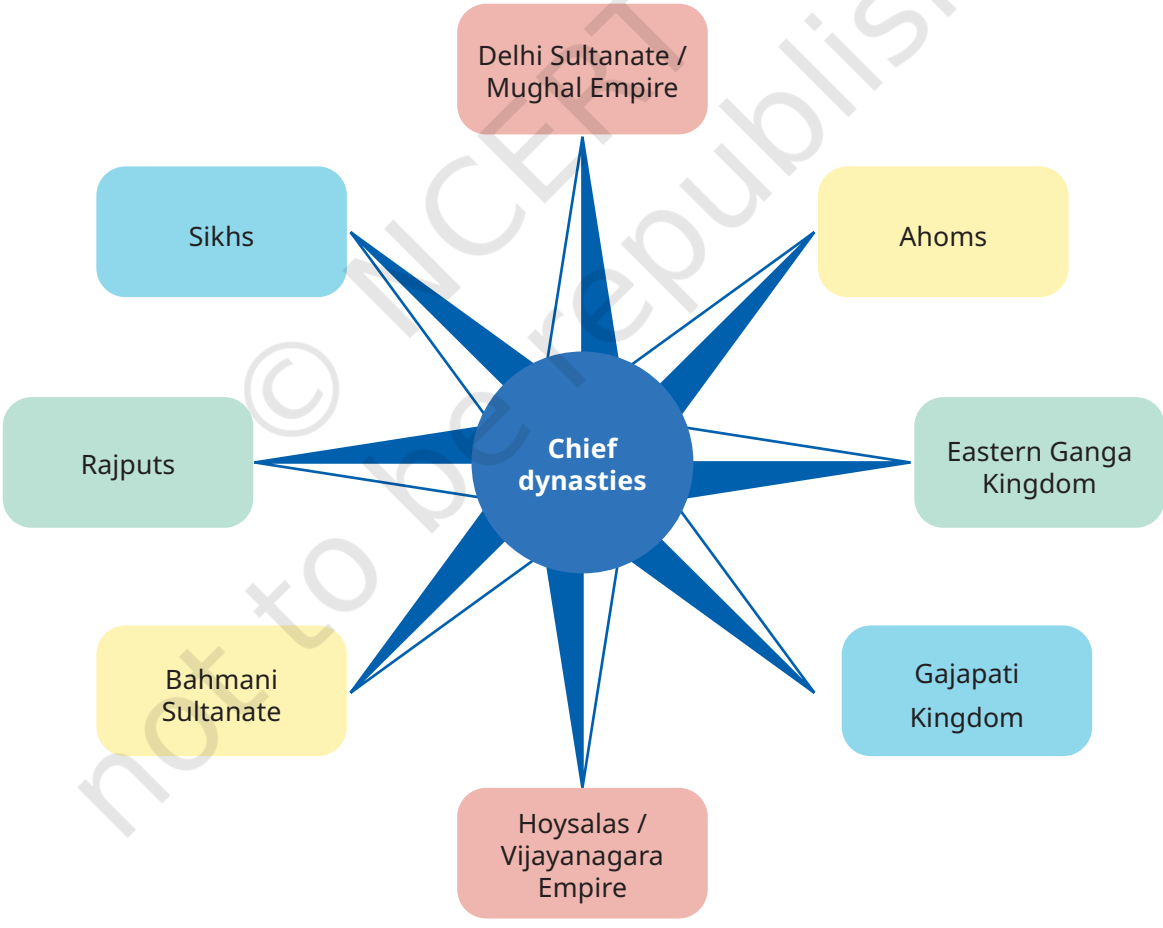

Fig. 2.27. This graphic sums up the chief dynasties involved in this chapter, with a rough indication of their geographical locations.

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Sikh Empire which spanned much of the Northwest, including parts of Kashmir. Till the mid-19th century, this empire resisted both Mughal remnants and later British expansion.

Administering India

Administration under the Delhi Sultanate

The Delhi Sultanate introduced a political system centred on the sultan, who possessed absolute authority as the political and military head, and whose duties, according to contemporary chronicles, included "defending the territories of Islam against possible aggression," "collecting fees and taxes" and "keeping in touch with public affairs and the condition of the people by personal contact." The sultan was however assisted by a council of ministers who were in charge of the various departments of the Sultanate.

One instrument of the administration was the *iqta* system, in which territories were assigned to nobles (*iqtadars*) to collect taxes which, minus expenses, were supposed to go to the Sultan's treasury; they were needed, in particular, to maintain the army. The system created a network of local administrators loyal to the central authority, but their posts were not hereditary. While taxes were levied on trade at every stage, the burden fell most heavily on the peasantry, and some contemporary accounts report considerable cruelty in extracting revenue from the land.

The Mughal administrative framework

Aiming at greater control and efficiency, Akbar reorganised his administrative machinery. The *Diwan* took care of the finances, while the *Mir Bakhshi* looked after military matters and the *Khan-i-Saman* was in charge of public works, trade, industry and agriculture, besides the royal household. The *Sadr* was responsible for justice, religious and educational matters. Such ministers were assigned to each of the empire's twelve provinces (*subahs*), which were further subdivided, with effective checks and balances enforced between the government officials. At the village level, traditional structures of self-governance continued more or less undisturbed.

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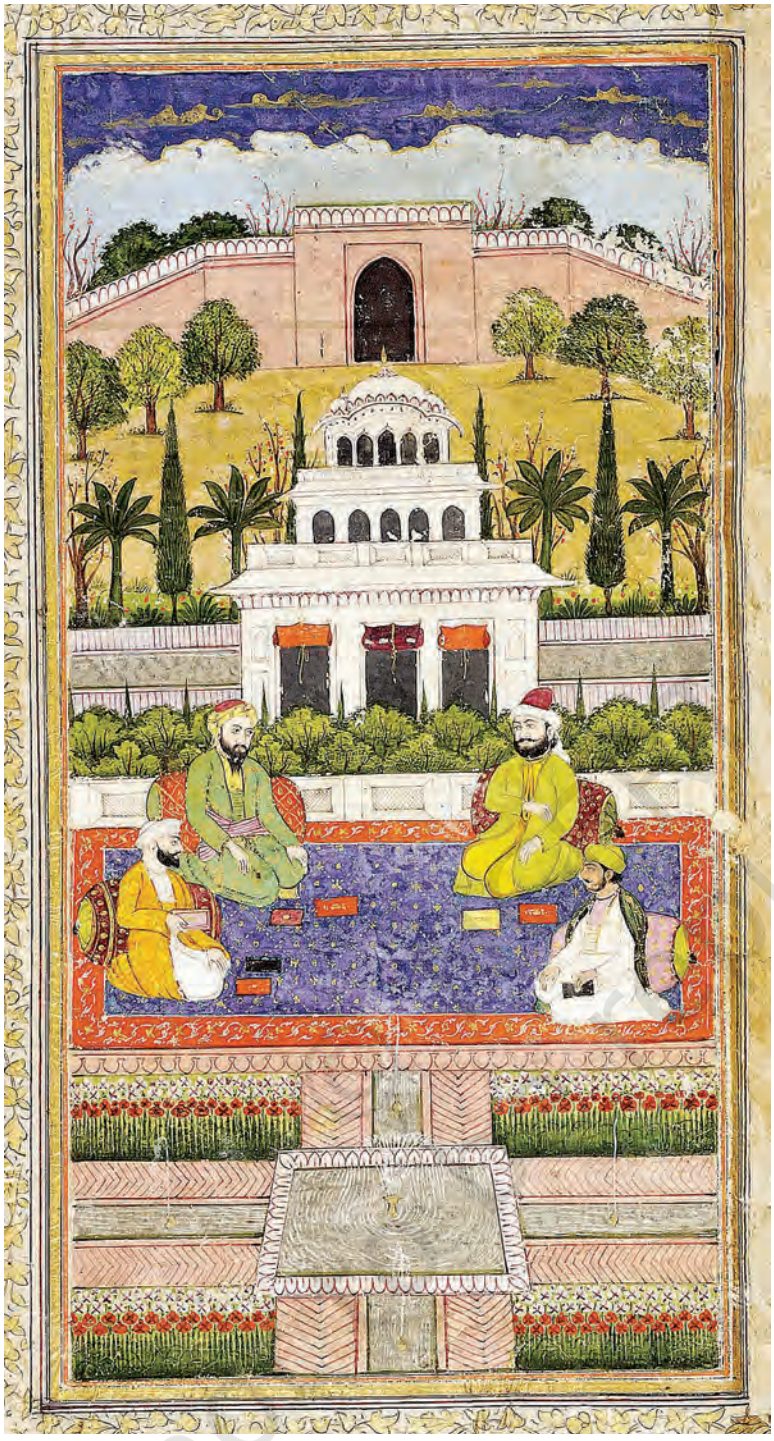

Fig. 2.28. Manuscript painting of Abul Fazl, seated on a terrace with his completed chronicles before him

Akbar also instituted the *mansabdari* system. As Abul Fazl recorded in his *Ain-i-Akbari*, which describes Akbar's administration, *mansabdars* (officers) according to their *mansab* (rank) were expected to maintain a precise number of elephants, horses, camels as well as troops for the state. This made it possible to assemble an army at a short notice without having to maintain a permanent centralised army. Regular inspections were carried out to ensure compliance. Mansabdars were generally paid by being assigned land (*jagirs*) and were therefore also known as *jagirdars*.

Despite Akbar's growing tolerance for different faiths, non-Muslims were kept in a minority in the higher echelons of the administration; for instance, the total percentage of non-Muslim officials in his administration rarely exceeded one-third of the total and was often much less. Even among Muslim officials, those of foreign origin were generally favoured over those of Indian origin.

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Todar Mal, Akbar's finance minister, introduced an efficient revenue system. He made detailed surveys for crop yields and prices, and determined prices for each crop on the basis of that information. He also initiated a systematic survey of the land in the entire empire which boosted revenue collection and strengthened the state apparatus.

We will see a different kind of administration, that of the Marathas, in the next chapter.

People's Lives

Despite shifting political powers between the 13th and 17th centuries, India witnessed vibrant economic activity, thanks to its agrarian foundations, thriving artisanal industries, community-based and temple-based economies, and extensive trade networks. Building on decentralised economic and social systems — such as *śhreṇis* (guilds), *jātis* (professionally defined communities), and systems for credit — the Subcontinent remained one of the wealthiest regions in the world.

The Sultanate period saw some progress in infrastructural works, especially roads in north India, bridges, a few canals and other irrigation works, apart from the creation of new cities, all of which expanded considerably during the Mughal period. Coins in several metals and denominations were introduced as currency. The Mughals will use a different system, with a *rupaya* of silver and a *dam* of copper.

Fig. 2.29. A Persian wheel used to draw water from wells or tanks to irrigate fields.

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Fig. 2.30. A Vijayanagara land grant, inscribed on a copper plate, the equivalent of modern-day property deeds.

Agriculture was the mainstay of the Indian economy; we have already seen how rulers relied on agrarian revenue to maintain their administration and military, typically extracting land revenue at one-fifth of the produce, though some of the sultans raised it as high as one-half. The expansion of irrigation systems increased agricultural productivity, allowing for the production of multiple crops, including both food (rice, wheat, barley, pulses, sugarcane, spices, etc.) and non-food items (cotton, which fed a thriving textile production, silk, wool, dyes, timber, jute, etc.). Let us note that agriculture output varied from region to region and period to period; the peasantry suffered several severe famines in this period, with relief depending upon the particular ruler's benevolence.

Apart from textiles, craftspeople made a wide range of products, from weapons to utensils to ornaments and jewellery items. Ship-building, essential to river and overseas trade, developed considerably in those centuries. Indian goods were exported through coastal and riverside towns such as Calicut, Mangalore, Surat, Masulipatnam or Hooghly. India imported much less than it exported; import products included silk, horses, metals, and all kinds of luxury goods. Merchants from Arabia, Persia (now Iran), and Central Asia settled in Indian ports, contributing to the bustling trade activity.

The *hundi* system also enabled merchants to transfer funds across political boundaries without physically transporting currency, making them less vulnerable to plunder. Trader communities, such as the Marwaris, became adept at operating across different political regimes, developing parallel systems of credit and trust that functioned independently of official structures.

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DON'T MISS OUT

A *hundi* was a written instruction to make payment to an individual. It could be carried across political borders and enabled financial transactions without the need to carry currency — a precursor to modern banking. These systems worked across trade networks without the participation of the ruling classes.

Temples as centres of economic activity

Many temples were more than centres for worship, learning, social interaction or performing arts. They also created ecosystems with bustling markets; ruling classes donated land and wealth (*dāna*) to temple deities, held in trust by temple managers who developed community infrastructure (irrigation systems, tanks, etc.) and pilgrim accommodations (*dharmaśhālās* and *chhatrams*). Temples provided merchants with credit and funded internal as well as maritime trade.

While early periods saw prosperity, the late 1600s witnessed economic stress. Peasants were often left with a small share of their produce after taxes and payments to intermediary parties. This caused many to lose their land and become bonded labourers.

Historians suggest that craftspeople and labourers, too, often faced harsh economic conditions. India was still a land of abundance, as testified by many Arab and European travellers, but the wealth was largely concentrated in the hands of the rulers, courtiers, high officials and the merchant class. Frequent warfare, in addition, caused forced displacement of population.

At the level of the common people, there were instances of clashes, especially over sacred sites that had been desecrated or destroyed under the rulers' sanction. But by and large, people of different faiths and communities lived peacefully side by side, economically dependent on each other.

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Even as most rulers across India patronised the arts, communities, too, strove to maintain or revive their traditions, many of which adapted to changing circumstances. Among those cultural traditions, a fair degree of interaction resulted in the creation of a shared heritage.

Through it all, India endured, economically prosperous on the whole but often politically unstable. During this period of frequent reshaping of the political map, India faced serious challenges, but survived. It is a tale not only of hardship but also of resilience — through the sword when the occasion demanded, but also through fresh creation in art, literature, spirituality, and timeless values.

Before we move on ...

- This period witnessed many foreign invasions led by Turkic, Afghan, and Mughal forces, which caused widespread destruction, the fall of old dynasties, and the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires. Continuous warfare, alliances and conquests reshaped India's political boundaries.
- The period had many instances of religious intolerance. Buddhists, Jains, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and tribals suffered severe persecution at times, though some rulers were more broad-minded than others.
- Agriculture and trade expanded, enhancing India's wealth and connectivity with the wider world. Yet the economic condition of the common subjects generally remained harsh.
- Indian society showed adaptability and resilience in rebuilding towns, cities, temples, and other aspects of the economy. At the same time, it found ways to preserve cultural traditions and blend indigenous and foreign elements to create new cultural expressions. Many forms of art and culture, including architecture, music and painting, flourished.

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Questions and activities

1. Compare the political strategies of the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals. What similarities and differences existed between them?
2. Why did kingdoms like the Vijayanagara Empire and the Ahom Kingdom manage to resist conquest for a longer time compared to others? What geographical, military, and social factors contributed to their success?
3. Imagine you are a scholar in the court of Akbar or Krishnadevaraya. Write a letter to a friend describing the politics, trade, culture, and society you are witnessing.
4. How come Akbar, a ruthless conqueror in his young days, grew tolerant and benevolent after some years? What could have led to such a change?
5. What might have happened if the Vijayanagara Empire had won the Battle of Talikota? Imagine and describe how it could have changed the political and cultural history of south India.
6. Many values promoted by early Sikhism, including equality, *seva*, and justice, remain relevant today. Select one of these values and discuss how it remains relevant in contemporary society.
7. Imagine you are a trader in a port city (Surat, Calicut or Hooghly). Describe the scenes you see as regards goods, people you trade with, movement of ships, etc.

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Noodles

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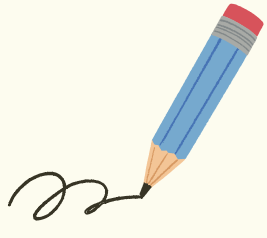
*‘Noodles’ is our abbreviation for ‘Notes and Doodles’!



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CHAPTER 3

The Rise of the Marathas

Among the merchants, the hat-wearers like the Portuguese, the English, the Dutch, the French and the Danes also conduct trade. But they are not like other merchants.... They are fully intent on entering this land, increasing their territory and propagating their religion. They are obstinate people, and Navy and gunpowder are their chief weapons. Their traffic should be controlled, and they shouldn't be allowed to build strong buildings.

— Ramachandrapant Amatya, Ādnyāpatra (1715)

Fig. 3.1. Raigad Fort, Maharashtra, with the grand entrance to the palace where Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was crowned in 1674, marking the formal beginning of the Maratha Empire.

The Big Questions?

1. *Who were the Marathas? How did they manage to become the largest pan-Indian power before the British took over?*
2. *What were some features of their governance?*
3. *What impact did the Maratha Empire leave in Indian history?*

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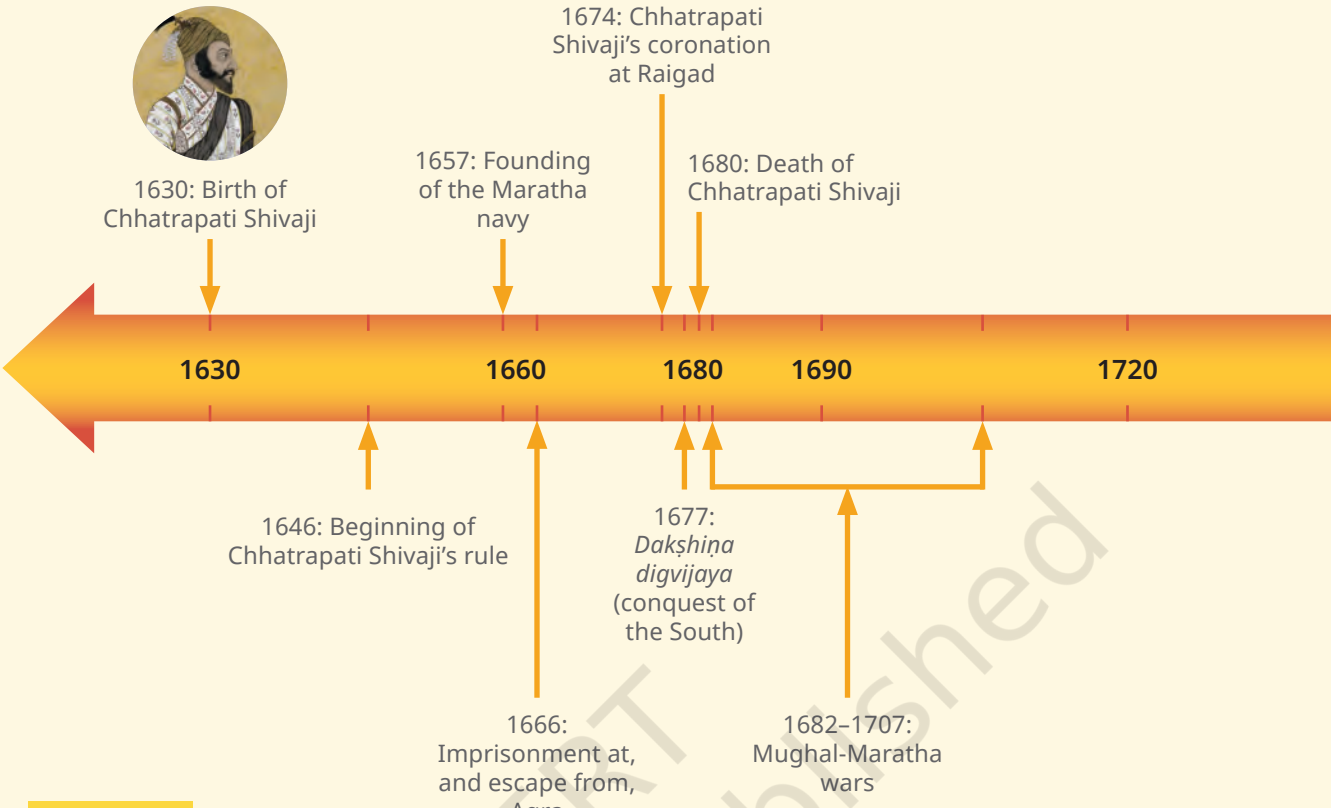

Fig. 3.2.

Literary history: The historical development of writings in prose or poetry in a particular language.

Who are the Marathas?

The Marathas are a group of people native to the Deccan plateau, more specifically present-day Maharashtra. They are identified with the language they speak — Marathi — which has had a rich and continuous **literary history** since the 12th century. In this chapter, we will see them rise as a powerful political entity that will alter the course of India's history.

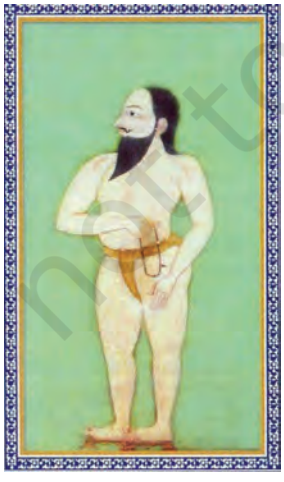

Fig. 3.3. Sant Ramdas

Fig. 3.4. Postal stamp showing Sant Tukaram

During the 13th century, most of Maharashtra was ruled by the Yadava dynasty with Devagiri (present-day Daulatabad) as its capital. In the early

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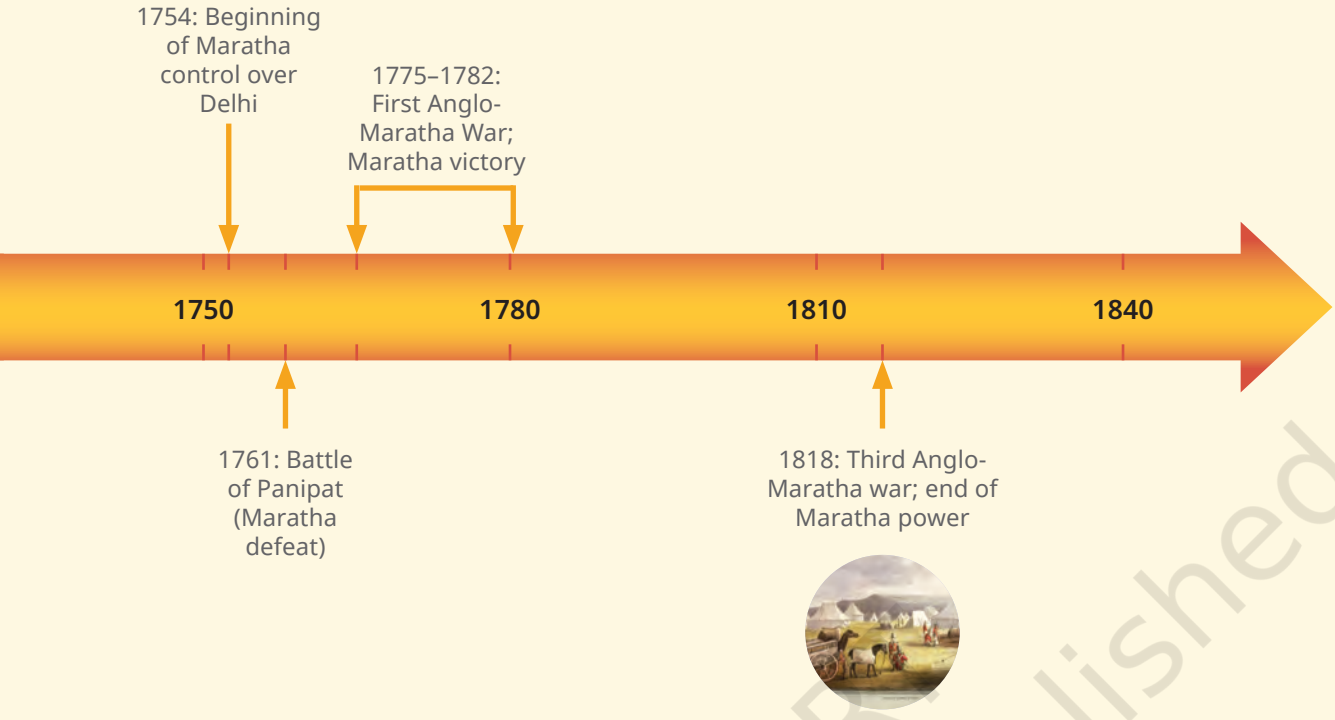

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14th century, the Yadava dynasty was overcome by the Khilji Sultanate from Delhi.

Amidst such political changes, the cultural traditions continued, particularly those related to bhakti (devotion to the divine or a particular deity). Between the 7th and the 17th centuries, for spiritual upliftment, saints and seekers from several parts of India preferred the path of bhakti to merely external ritualism. These saints, coming from diverse sections of society, composed devotional songs and poetry in the languages of the masses, which allowed their messages to travel far and wide.

LET'S EXPLORE

Have you ever heard the term 'bhakti'? What does it mean to you? Choose a bhakti saint from any part of India and learn about their life, their teachings, and the message they shared. You can also find one of their poems or ***bhajans*** and share it with your classmates.

In Maharashtra, many saints like Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Tukaram, Ramdas, etc., gained popularity at this time. They helped translate important texts like the Upaniṣhads and the Bhagavad Gītā into Marathi, making their philosophy accessible to the people. Some also focused on social organisation and political awareness, similar to the Sikh gurus. As a result, the society acquired a solid cultural foundation, which later helped the Marathas to organise themselves into a political power.

By the 17th century, some Maratha chiefs made early attempts at establishing sovereignty, but they proved unsuccessful — until Chhatrapati Shivaji rose to power and brought the Marathas together. But who was Shivaji?

***Jāgīr*:** A *jāgīr* was a piece of land given by a king or ruler to someone (usually a noble or soldier) as a reward for their service. The person who got the *jāgīr* could collect taxes from the land and use the money to take care of their needs or help the king when needed.

Foundation of Maratha Power and the Rise of Chhatrapati Shivaji

In 1630, Shivaji was born in the Bhonsle clan to Shahji and Jijabai. At the time, Shahji served the Deccan sultanates and was often away from his family. Meanwhile, in his ***jāgīr*** at Pune, Chhatrapati Shivaji grew up under the watchful eyes of Jijabai and some trusted officials, receiving values and a good education. At this time, the Pune region was deeply affected by constant infighting between the Deccan sultans whom the Marathas served, which caused much hardship for the common people.

Fig. 3.5. A painting of Shivaji made in the 1680s (British Museum)

When he was just 16, Chhatrapati Shivaji launched military campaigns, first consolidating his hold over the Pune region by capturing neglected and unoccupied forts and strengthening their defences. His vision of a sovereign kingdom or 'Swarājya' grew over the years, extending to political, economic and cultural aspects, which we will explore in this chapter.

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Fig. 3.6. The Sindhudurg Fort near the Maharashtra-Goa border is one of the several naval fortifications built by the Marathas.

Chhatrapati Shivaji's kingdom soon expanded to India's west coast, and to secure access to the resources of coastal regions, he felt the need to establish a navy. This was a truly revolutionary step at the time. By comparison, the Bijapur Sultanate (ruled by the Adil Shahi dynasty), maintained merchant ships but did not possess a full-time naval force which could protect the coast; even the Mughal Empire's use of a navy was very limited. Thus, the Maratha Navy was born, whose exploits became legendary.

To protect his people from powerful enemies, Chhatrapati Shivaji had recourse to the tactic of guerrilla warfare, which uses small groups of people in a focused way, with speed, surprise, and knowledge of the terrain to defeat bigger armies. His successes soon invited the wrath of the Bijapur Sultanate, which sent the veteran general Afzal Khan to confront him. Chhatrapati Shivaji and his advisers managed to convince Afzal Khan to meet him for a one-on-one meeting at the foot of the Pratapgad fort amid thick forests. There, Chhatrapati Shivaji killed Afzal Khan, and the Marathas, hidden in the mountains, routed the Khan's army with guerrilla attacks.

THINK ABOUT IT

If you could time-travel and meet Chhatrapati Shivaji, what three questions would you ask him and why?

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DON'T MISS OUT

The *wāgh nakh* is a small weapon shaped like a tiger's claw, which Chhatrapati Shivaji used to kill Afzal Khan in close combat.

Fig. 3.7. Wāgh nakh or the 'tiger's claw'.

LET'S EXPLORE

Try to find out more about guerrilla warfare. Which other countries in the world adopted this method? What geographical advantages did they utilise for this? Discuss your findings in groups.

Surgical strike: A military attack intended to damage only a specific target, with no or minimal damage to other people or infrastructure.

Soon afterwards, the Mughal nobleman Shaista Khan invaded Chhatrapati Shivaji's territories with a big army for three years. Finally, with only a few soldiers, Chhatrapati Shivaji raided Shaista Khan's camp at night. The Khan barely escaped from the raid, losing a few fingers, and promptly left Maharashtra. This daring raid resembles the modern-day **surgical strike**.

As a retaliatory action for the three-year-long wave of attacks, Chhatrapati Shivaji sacked Surat, a wealthy port city of the Mughal Empire (in present-day Gujarat). There, he obtained enormous treasure worth almost one crore of rupees, an extremely large sum for the time. However, he was careful not to attack religious places and even spared the house of Mohandas Parekh, a charitable man. He sacked Surat again after a few years. These events became so famous that they appeared in the London Gazette, an English newspaper of the time, which conveyed how Chhatrapati Shivaji wrote to all European diplomatic agents in Surat, demanding 'immediate presents of money', failing which he would 'return and ruin that city'.

The sacking of Surat was a great insult to the might and prestige of the Mughal Empire. Therefore, Aurangzeb sent Jai Singh, a distinguished Rajput general, to defeat Chhatrapati Shivaji. Against him, Chhatrapati Shivaji had to concede defeat at Purandar Fort (near Pune) and enter into a treaty. He had to give up a sizeable part of his kingdom, and his son Sambhaji had to enter Mughal service.

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Chhatrapati Shivaji was persuaded by Jai Singh to visit the Mughal court at Agra, where he was made to stand before Aurangzeb, and a Mughal general whom he had defeated earlier. Incensed at this insult, Chhatrapati Shivaji stormed out of the court, following which Aurangzeb put him under house arrest. To escape this, Chhatrapati Shivaji devised a strategy — he started distributing gifts to holy men and Mughal generals. The gifts often contained fruits and sweets, packed in big baskets. The guards initially checked them, but soon stopped doing so; expecting this, Chhatrapati Shivaji and his son Sambhaji hid themselves in the baskets and made their escape. Aurangzeb could never capture Chhatrapati Shivaji again.

Fig. 3.8. A court scene with Chhatrapati Shivaji on his throne receiving visitors (panel in Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Park, Mumbai)

A few years later, in 1674, Chhatrapati Shivaji was coronated with full Vedic rites at the strong mountain fortress of Raigad. His formal title after the coronation was 'Shri Raja Shiva Chhatrapati', and like some past rulers, he started his own era, the *Rājyābhiṣheka shaka*.

After this, Chhatrapati Shivaji embarked upon a conquest of the South, also referred to as the *dakṣhiṇa-digvijaya*, which included the important and then ill-defended region of present-day northern Tamil Nadu and parts of Karnataka (see map in Fig. 3.9). This southern extension later gave the Marathas great strategic depth against the Mughal invasion.

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DON'T MISS OUT

While in the South, Chhatrapati Shivaji forbade the Dutch from trading slaves. At the time, most Europeans were capturing and selling Indians as slaves and encountered no opposition from Indian powers, until Chhatrapati Shivaji intervened. His stance on this abuse showed his deep concern for his subjects.

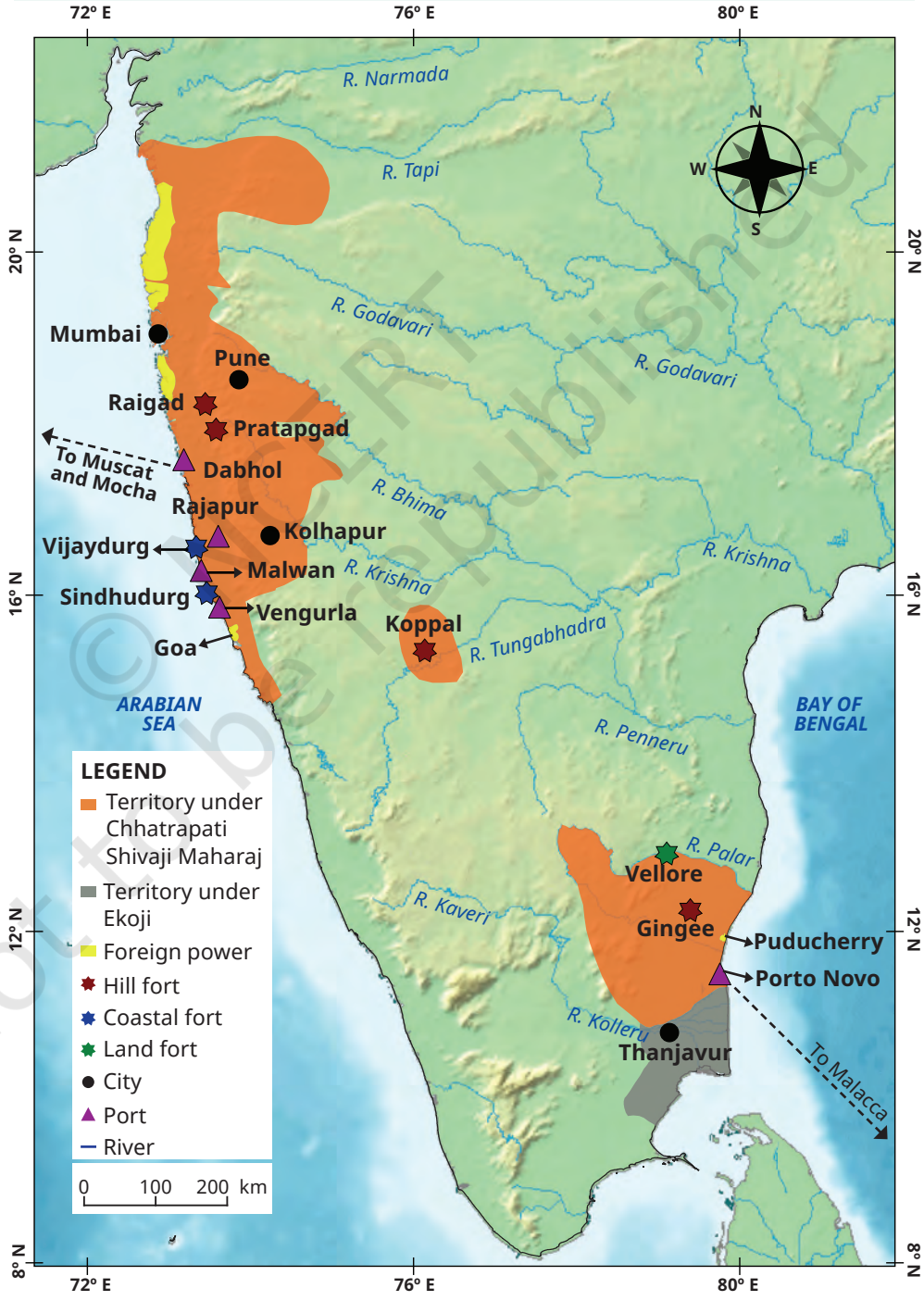

Fig. 3.9. Chhatrapati Shivaji's Kingdom about 1680 (Ekoji's role is explained later in the chapter).

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A fever claimed Chhatrapati Shivaji's life when he was fifty. He was a master strategist and a true visionary, and within his lifetime, his exploits had become legendary across India and beyond. The Europeans compared him with ancient generals like Alexander, and the Bundela prince Chhatrasal was so inspired by Chhatrapati Shivaji's struggle against the Mughals that he managed to create an independent kingdom of Bundelkhand (divided between present-day Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh). The famous Hindi poet Bhushan specifically came to Maharashtra to meet Chhatrapati Shivaji and composed poems in his praise, some of which remain famous to this day.

LET'S EXPLORE

Pick an event from Chhatrapati Shivaji's life and, with your classmates, stage it as a play.

The Marathas after Chhatrapati Shivaji

Chhatrapati Shivaji had two sons — Sambhaji and Rajaram. After Chhatrapati Shivaji's death, Sambhaji became the Chhatrapati. The Marathas were then the only obstacle to total Mughal control of the Deccan. Aurangzeb invaded the Deccan and conquered the Bijapur (or Adil Shahi) and Golconda (or Qutb Shahi) Sultanates. He then captured Sambhaji and, after torturing him brutally, executed him. After this, he captured Raigad, the Maratha capital.

After Sambhaji, Rajaram became the Chhatrapati and fled to Gingee (in present-day Tamil Nadu). The Mughal-Maratha conflict thus spread to south India. The Marathas staunchly defended their fortresses and often had the upper hand over the Mughals in battles and skirmishes. Aurangzeb was thus unable to leave the Deccan and died without having succeeded in subduing the Marathas, who emerged as a strong contender to the Mughals. No longer on the defensive, the Marathas led by Tarabai, Rajaram's queen, made large-scale inroads into Mughal territories, eventually conquering large parts of India.

During this rapid expansion, the Marathas themselves underwent a structural transformation. The centralised state

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Fig. 3.10. Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj (Sambhaji's son), seated right and sporting a falcon, in counsel with Nanasaheb Peshwa

from Chhatrapati Shivaji's time gave way to a more decentralised structure, still nominally centred around the Chhatrapati, but with the chiefs wielding more power. In particular, the Peshwa (a Persian term for 'prime minister') wielded great influence, even over the Chhatrapati himself. In particular, Peshwa Bajirao I and his son Nanasaheb Peshwa were instrumental in the pan-Indian expansion of the Marathas.

The Marathas brought large parts of India under their control and generally ruled them well. But with the regional chiefs acquiring more power and autonomy, this also resulted in occasional indiscipline and abuse, in stark contrast with Chhatrapati Shivaji's values. For instance, the Marathas' ten-year campaign in Bengal inflicted much cruelty and devastation on the common people.

In their northward expansion, the Marathas briefly controlled the areas of Lahore, Attock and even Peshawar (in modern-day Pakistan). They fought with the Afghans, and despite suffering a disastrous defeat at Panipat in 1761, they quickly recovered during the time of Peshwa Madhavrao I. Under the leadership of Mahadji Shinde (also known as Mahadji Scindia), they went on to recapture Delhi in 1771, which remained under their control till the British captured it three decades later.

In the latter half of the 18th century, the chief rivals of the British in India were the Marathas. Three Anglo-Maratha wars (as they are called) were fought between 1775 and 1818. Owing to the Marathas' increased internal disunity and the superior organisational and technological abilities of the British, they succeeded in ending the Maratha power. In effect, the British took India from the Marathas more than from the Mughals or any other power.

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DON'T MISS OUT

Did you know that Nana Phadnavis, a powerful official under the Peshwas, is credited with organising the first pan-Indian anti-British alliance? He even united with old adversaries like Hyder Ali of Mysore and the Nizam of Hyderabad in this endeavour.

Fig. 3.11. A mural of a British officer surrendering before Nana Phadnavis and Mahadji Shinde after the first Anglo-Maratha war.

Maratha Administration

Civilian administration

Chhatrapati Shivaji instituted a relatively centralised administration for his kingdom. He abolished the hereditary posts (generally practised under the Sultans or the Mughals) and land assignments and paid a salary to every government official out of the state treasury. Many officials were periodically transferred as well, ensuring that they would not have enough power to dictate terms to the king.

Chhatrapati Shivaji also gave pensions to widows of soldiers who died in battles, even offering military posts to their sons, thus demonstrating his care for the soldiers and their families.

Fig. 3.12. Chhatrapati Shivaji minted gold and copper coins in his own name, signifying his sovereignty. The use of the Devanagari script was also an assertion of his cultural identity.

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THINK ABOUT IT

Chhatrapati Shivaji issued strict instructions to his officials not to mistreat the subjects or to forcefully grab even a blade of grass from them. In one of the letters issued to his officials, Chhatrapati Shivaji says:

"Wood from big trees like teak is required for the Navy. If needed, secure permission for cutting the trees from the forest and then proceed. Other trees like the mango and jackfruit are also useful, but do not touch them. Because such trees take many years to mature, and the people look after them like their children. If you cut them, will their sorrow ever end? If you accomplish something by oppressing others, it perishes soon, along with the oppressor. There is harm in the absence of such trees as well. Therefore, do not use force in any circumstances."

Based on Chhatrapati Shivaji's letter, what can you tell about his values as a ruler?

Chhatrapati Shivaji also had an *aṣhṭa pradhāna maṇḍala*, or council of eight ministers (Fig. 3.13), to assist him with administration.

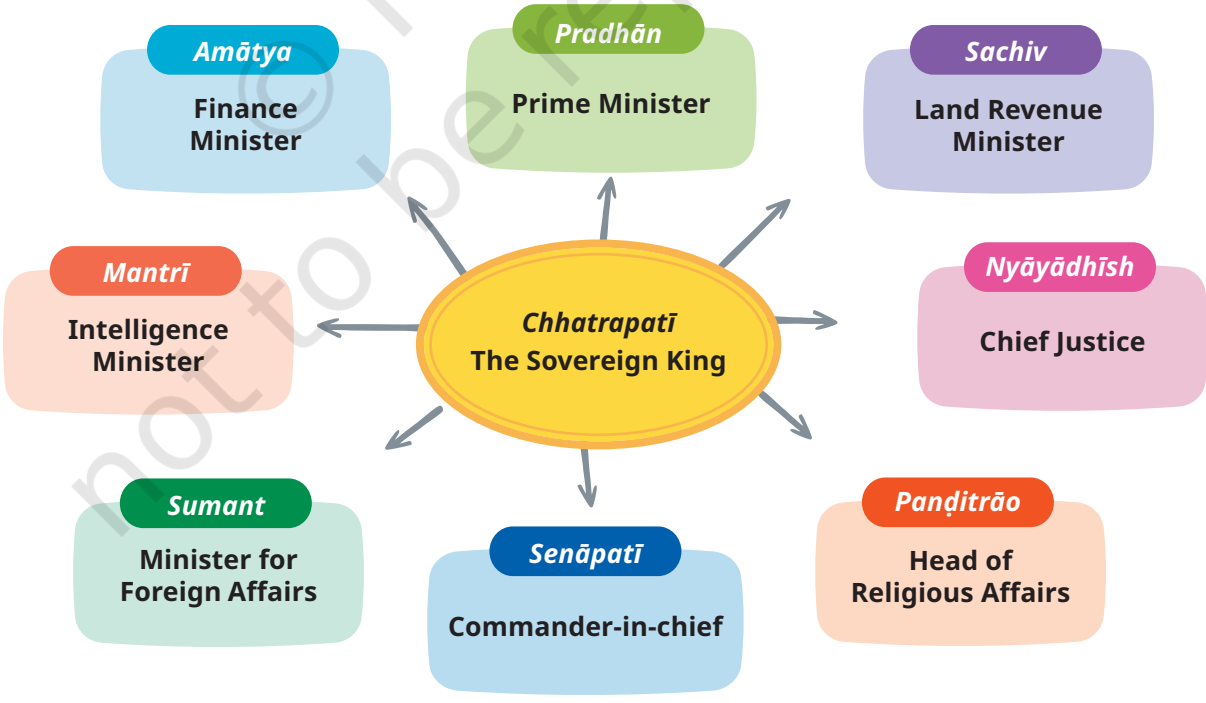

Fig. 3.13.

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The Marathas often levied taxes called *chauth* (25 per cent) and *sardeshmukhi* (an additional 10 per cent to *chauth*) from provinces that were not directly under them, including places in the Deccan and north India. In return, the Marathas protected those provinces and did not intervene in their internal administration. The Mughals also approved of this arrangement through various treaties, and over time, some of these provinces became a part of the Maratha Empire.

DON'T MISS OUT

In the 18th century, the Marathas often adopted the Mughal style of coinage owing to its popularity, but added their own cultural symbols to it. For instance, this rare Maratha coin known as the 'Gaṇapatī-Pantapradhān rupee', minted in the early 19th century by the Patwardhans (generals under the Peshwa), features inscriptions in two scripts — Devanagari and Persian. One side is an invocation to Gaṇapati *(*Gaṇeśha*)* while the other declares loyalty to the Peshwa (often referred to as 'Pantapradhān' in Marathi).

Fig. 3.14.

Military administration

The Maratha armed forces were divided into three parts — infantry, cavalry and navy. The cavalry was made up of two types of soldiers — the *bārgīrs*, whose horses and equipment were paid for by the state, and the *shiledārs*, whose horses and equipment were paid for by the soldiers themselves. In the 18th century, the Marathas also noticed the superiority of European-style disciplined troops and artillery, and they tried to raise and recruit such troops. In particular, Mahadji Shinde had a large European-style army.

Swords and lances were the preferred weapons of the Marathas (Fig. 3.15). However, they also used guns in sizable numbers. Rockets were used in military campaigns from the days of Shivaji himself, and by 1770, metal tube rockets were also being used.

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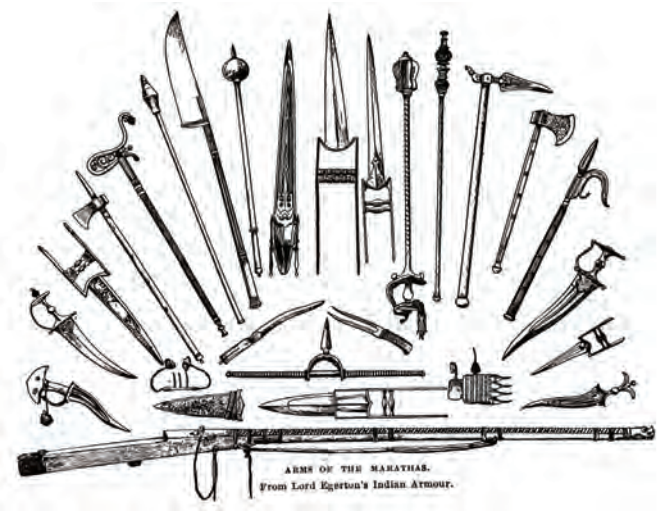

Fig. 3.15. Some of the weapons used by the Marathas.

As we saw earlier, forts were initially the mainstay of Maratha power. Chhatrapati Shivaji controlled and built a considerable number of forts, as they were essential to strategically control important routes and shelter the army when engaging in guerrilla warfare.

Ramachandrapant Amatya, the finance minister of Chhatrapati Shivaji, in his work *Ādnyāpatra* ('The Royal Edict') explains,

> "Forts are the core of the state. In their absence, the land gets devastated in the face of an invasion. Therefore, all the former kings secured the country by building forts. This kingdom (Maratha kingdom) was created by the late great master [Shivaji] from forts alone ... A great enemy like Aurangzeb invaded [this kingdom], conquered great empires like Bijapur and Bhaganagar [... but] it was due to forts that the [Maratha] state survived despite decades of onslaught."

Maritime supremacy

As we saw, Chhatrapati Shivaji created a navy to secure the west coast. In the 18th century, Kanhoji Angre guided the Marathas to victory in many naval battles, thanks to a clever use of geography and battle tactics, despite the Maratha ships not being as technologically advanced as the European ones.

At the time, the main strength of Europeans in India was their navies. They forced Indians to purchase their naval trade passes (*cartaz* in Portuguese) at a price; any ship without a pass was confiscated. The Marathas challenged this practice and started demanding passes from the Europeans themselves — who showed their frustration by labelling Kanhoji Angre a 'pirate'!

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MAHRATTA GRABS AND GALLIVATS ATTACKING AN ENGLISH SHIP. [*Frontispiece.*

(*From a picture in the possession of Sir Ernest Robinson.*)

Fig. 3.16. Maratha ships attacking English ships

DON'T MISS OUT

In 1665, four ships from Chhatrapati Shivaji's fleet reached Muscat, the capital of Oman. The ruler there captured them and arrested the men onboard. He also prepared a few ships to attack Shivaji's coastal possessions. But, on hearing that Chhatrapati Shivaji's Navy contained more than a hundred ships, he retreated inside the harbour with his ships.

Judicial system

The Marathas had an efficient judicial system, remarkable for its moderation in using capital punishment (the death penalty). The *panchāyat* (not to be confused with the current-day Panchayat, a governmental body) was a local gathering of officials and prominent men, and the main body that delivered justice. An appeal could be made to a Maratha chief in case of an unsatisfactory verdict. Additionally, in various prominent

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towns such as Pune, Indore, etc., the *kotwāl* or the police was also deployed to ensure law and order within the city.

Trade networks

Chhatrapati Shivaji encouraged trade and actively participated in maritime foreign trade himself. He and his officials had their own ships, which they regularly sent to ports as far away as Mocha in Yemen, Muscat in Oman, and Malacca in Malaysia. Some of these ships carried cargo like gold, textiles, etc.

Roads were constructed and maintained. In places such as Odisha in the 18th century, a network of ferries was maintained for riverine transport. Bridges were built over rivers and small streams.

Fig. 3.17. Chhatrapati Shivaji's seal

Cultural Revival

The Marathas contributed substantially to India's cultural developments. Chhatrapati Shivaji's vision of Swarājya is evident in his seal, which carried a Sanskrit inscription, a notable departure from the prevalent Persian seals — "This seal (i.e. authority) of Chhatrapati Shivaji, the son of Shahji, waxing like the new moon, revered by the world, reigns for the welfare (of the people)."

Chhatrapati Shivaji also commissioned a treatise called *Rājya-Vyavahāra-Koṣha* with the aim of promoting the Marathi language; it provided Sanskrit equivalents for the prevalent Persian words used in diplomatic exchanges, as a result of which, the percentage of foreign loanwords in Maratha diplomacy decreased considerably. Chhatrapati Shivaji was a devout Hindu who respected other religions while upholding his own. His saffron-coloured flag was adopted by all Marathas. He rebuilt desecrated temples, promoted Sanskrit and Marathi literature, religious institutions, and traditional arts.

But perhaps he contributed most to the revival of ancient Indian culture and values by giving people a demonstration that mighty kingdoms and empires could be defeated, and the Marathas could maintain, expand and administer an empire of their own.

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The mighty Maratha women

Fig. 3.18. Tarabai in battle (painting by M.V. Dhurandhar)

Tarabai was a fearless Maratha warrior queen who ruled in the early 18th century after the death of her husband Rajaram. Realising that with the presence of Aurangzeb and the Mughal army in the Deccan, north India was unprotected, she organised large Maratha armies and sent them to invade Mughal territories in the north. In that sense, she was the architect of the northward Maratha expansion. Her sense of military strategy and her tenacity outsmarted the Mughal Empire and preserved Maratha independence during a critical period.

Ahilyabai Holkar was a scion of the Holkar dynasty, one of the chief families instrumental for the Maratha expansion in north India; during the 18th century, this dynasty ruled a kingdom of considerable extent in central India, around present-day Indore. Even after losing her husband and son, she bravely governed the state for thirty years, administering it wisely while caring for the common people. Ahilyabai was a devout person who built and restored hundreds of temples, ghats, wells, and roads throughout India, from Kedarnath in the north to Rameswaram in the south.

Fig. 3.19. A postage stamp commemorating Ahilyabai Holkar

Most famously, she rebuilt the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi that had been destroyed by Aurangzeb and the Somnath temple in Gujarat that had been destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni. Ahilyabai Holkar is also credited with promoting the Maheshwar weaving industry in Madhya Pradesh, revitalising traditional handloom crafts that continue to thrive today.

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DON'T MISS OUT

The Moḍī script (a cursive form of Devanagari) was the main script used by Marathas for their correspondence.

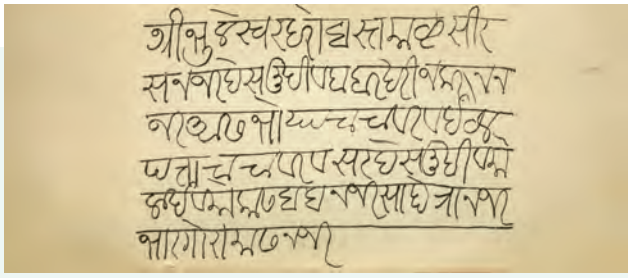

Fig. 3.20. A sample of Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj's handwriting in the Moḍī script

Chhatrapati Shivaji's example continued to inspire his successors. For instance, the Bhonsles of Nagpur emerged as the enthusiastic supporters of local culture and tradition, and the worship of the deity Jagannath at Puri (in Odisha), which was often interrupted during the Mughal rule, was revived with the support of the Marathas. But perhaps the most impressive contribution came from a few remarkable Maratha women. Let us hear about two of them (see Page 77).

In focus: Thanjavur

Fig. 3.21. A traditional Thanjavur style painting, featuring delicate gold foil work that lends it a rich, radiant appearance; this style flourished under the patronage of the Marathas

Let us turn southward to witness another example of cultural contribution. Ekoji, the half-brother of Chhatrapati Shivaji, conquered the Thanjavur region (in present-day Tamil Nadu) in the late 17th century, marking the beginning of Maratha rule in the area. The Thanjavur Marathas especially helped create a syncretic culture that was rich and full of innovation. They were great patrons of the arts, and many of the rulers themselves were poets and dramatists.

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LET'S EXPLORE

Have you heard of the dance form 'Bharatnatyam'? Did you know that this dance form has a deep connection with the Marathas? Can you find out what this connection was?

Of all the Thanjavur Maratha rulers, the contributions of Serfoji II are the most notable. He was well-versed in many Indian and European languages and wrote a Marathi play named *Devendra Kuravanji,* where he describes world geography in detail as was known at the time. Serfoji patronised many talented musicians, and it was during his time that modern Carnatic music took shape, as did the early stages of the famous classical dance form of Bharatanatyam.

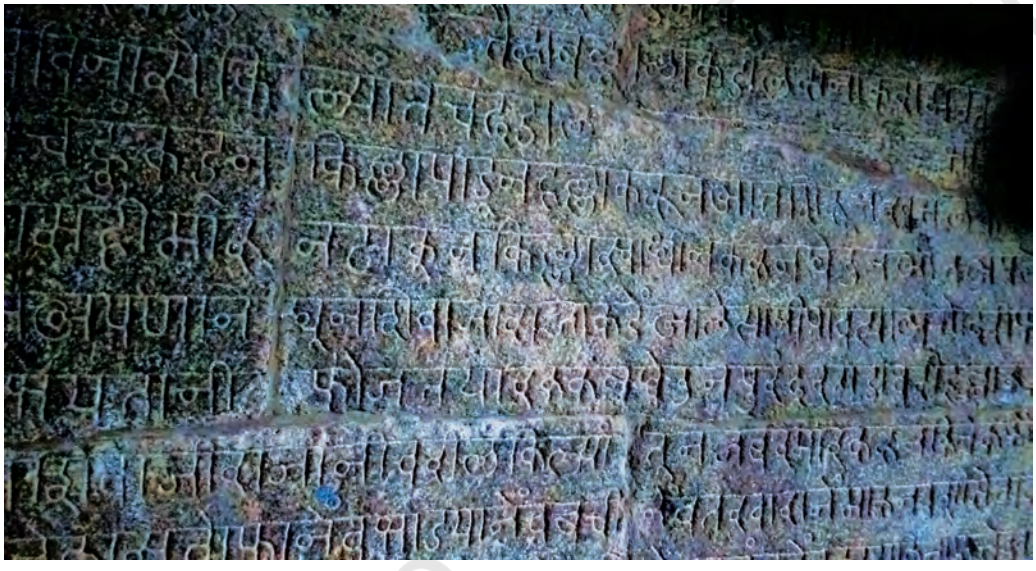

Fig. 3.22. Marathi inscription on a wall of the Brihadishwara temple wall recording the history of the Bhonsle family.

Serfoji was quite interested in medicine and established the Dhanwantari Mahal, a centre of medicine that offered free treatment of diseases using both Indian and Western medicine. He also started a printing press, the first such example in India by a native ruler. He got the history of the Bhonsle family inscribed on the walls of the Brihadishwara temple at Thanjavur, which is one of the largest single inscriptions in India, a record for posterity.

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The cultural environment of Thanjavur was multilingual, with a mix of many influences. The local Tamil culture, the Telugu culture of the former rulers, and the current rulers' Marathi culture interacted with each other freely.

The Maratha legacy

The Maratha rule challenged Mughal dominance and established the largest Indian empire before the British took over the Subcontinent, controlling much of central and northern India. They set up a new way of governing with an efficient administration, and also revived the local Hindu traditions without religious discrimination. Their brave fight against oppressive rule and foreign power was driven by the fiery ideal of Swarājya. Later it inspired many Indians to believe they could govern themselves, planting the early seeds for India's freedom movement.

Before we move on ...

- Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj founded the Maratha kingdom in the 17th century. Its decades-long resistance to Mughal power, and the experience gained from this, helped in its pan-Indian expansion in the 18th century.
- The British captured India effectively from the Marathas more than from any other Indian power.
- Forts were the core of Maratha state; the Marathas controlled hundreds of forts, thus strategically strengthening their control over the region.
- Their formidable navy resisted European naval supremacy for quite some time despite lack of access to the latest technology of the time.
- The Marathas inspired a new cultural confidence amongst Indians in various regions, thus contributing to the cultural revival and innovation.

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Questions and activities

1. Analyse how geography (particularly mountains and coastlines) guided Maratha military strategy and state formation.
2. Imagine you are creating a short biography of a Maratha leader for younger students. Choose one personality (Kanhoji Angre, Bajirao I, Mahadji Shinde, Ahilyabai Holkar or Tarabai) and write 3-4 paragraphs highlighting what makes them inspirational. Include at least one challenge they overcame.
3. If you could visit one Maratha fort today (such as Raigad, Sindhudurg, Gingee, or Pratapgad), which would you choose and why? Research its history, architecture, and strategic importance. Present your findings as a digital presentation or a poster in class.
4. The chapter states, "The British took India from the Marathas more than from the Mughals or any other power." What do you think this means? What evidence from the chapter supports this idea?
5. Compare how Chhatrapati Shivaji and later Marathas treated religious places and people of different faiths. What evidence from the chapter shows their approach to religious diversity?
6. The chapter describes how forts were 'the core of the state' for Marathas. Why were they so important? How did they help the Marathas survive against larger enemies?
7. You have been appointed as the chief designer for Maratha coins. Design a coin that represents Maratha achievements and values. Explain the symbols you chose.
8. After this introduction to the Maratha period, what do you think was their most important contribution to Indian history? Write a paragraph supporting your opinion with examples from the chapter. Then share and discuss your ideas with classmates.

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Noodles

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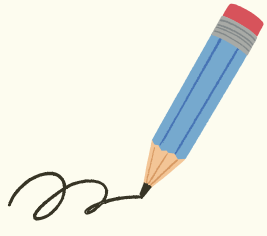
*‘Noodles’ is our abbreviation for ‘Notes and Doodles’!



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CHAPTER 4

The Colonial Era in India

Nearly two centuries ago the early Britons in Bengal and the sister Presidencies regarded the land and the people as fair game for plunder. ... Under the later Britons, as administrators ... the plunder is proceeding far more outrageously today than at any preceding period. ... Modern England has been made great by Indian wealth, ... wealth always taken by the might and skill of the stronger.

— William Digby (1901)

Fig. 4.1. A painting entitled 'The East offering its riches to Britannia', by a Greek painter, Spiridione Roma, 1778. (The painting is discussed later in the chapter.)

The Big Questions

1. *What is colonialism?*
2. *What drew European powers to India?*
3. *What was India's economic and geopolitical standing before and during the colonial period?*
4. *How did the British colonial domination of India impact the country?*

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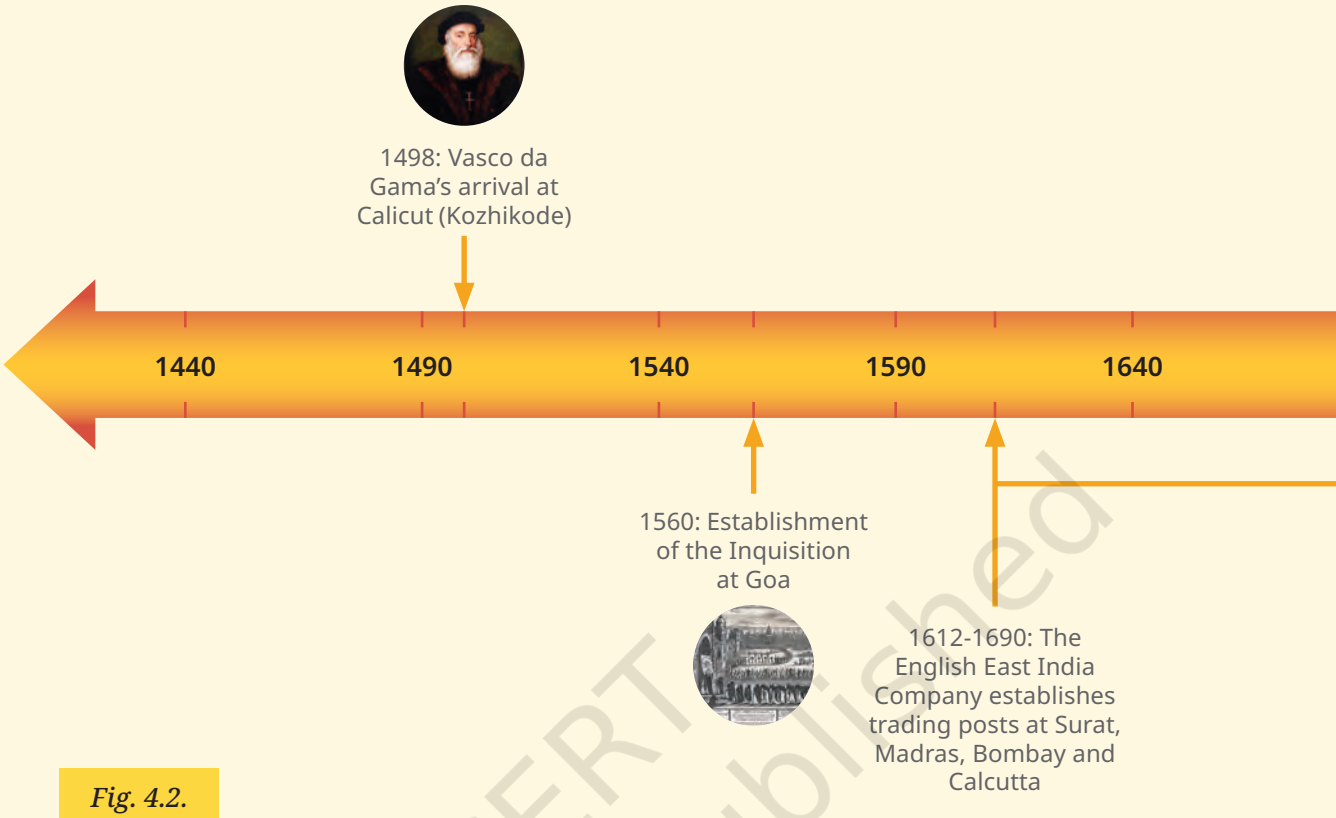

Fig. 4.2.

In the previous chapter, we saw the Marathas considerably weaken the Mughal Empire, before they themselves succumbed to the British forces early in the 19th century. And yet, military campaigns were only one factor in India becoming the 'jewel in the Crown' of the British Empire — indeed, the empire's largest colony.

The Age of Colonialism

Before we get there, we must step back a little in time and consider the phenomenon of colonialism. Its usual definition is the practice where one country takes control of another region, establishing settlements there, and imposing its political, economic, and cultural systems. This is not a recent occurrence: colonialism can be traced to the time of the great empires in the 1st millennium BCE; in the 1st millennium CE, the spread of Christianity and Islam also involved the colonisation of the territories converted to the new faiths.

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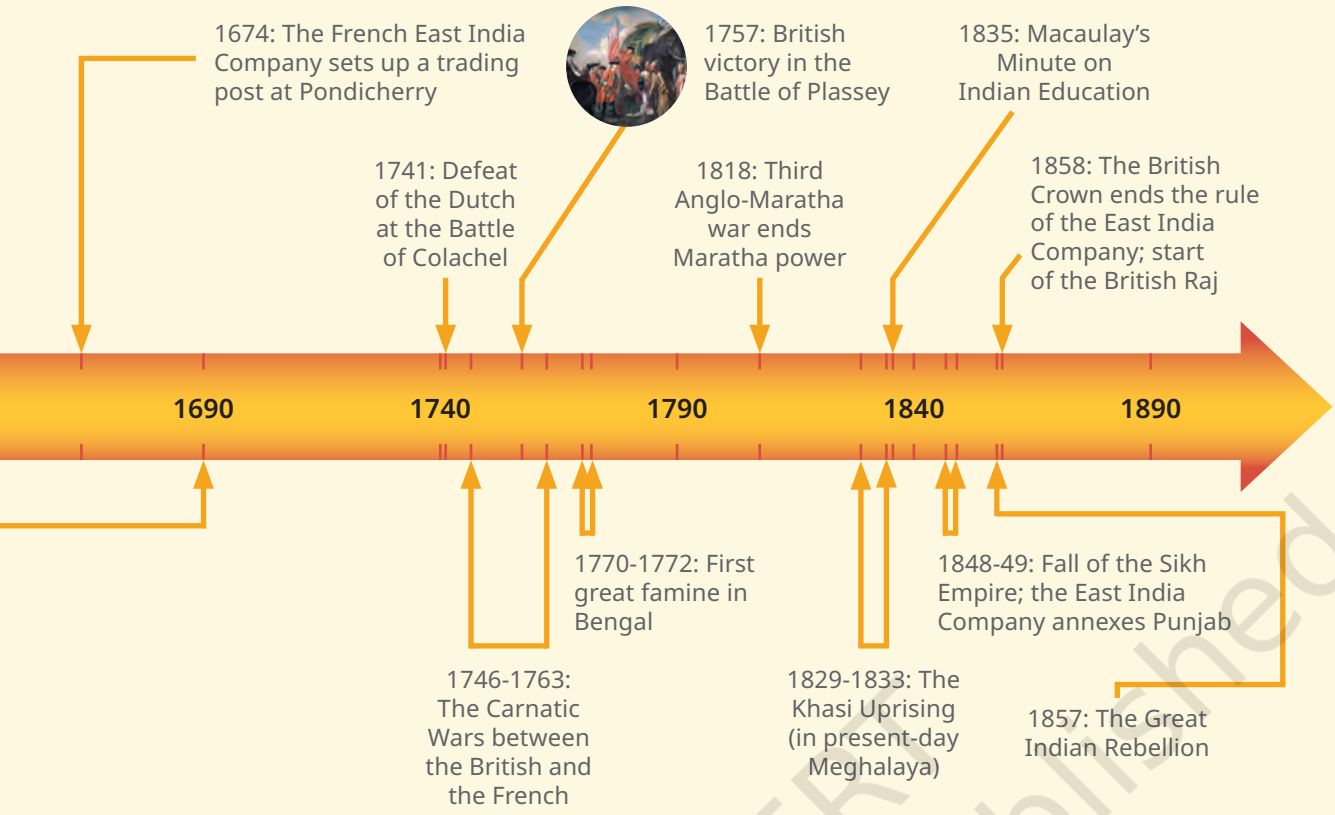

But the 'Age of Colonialism' usually refers to Europe's expansion from the 15th century onward, which, within a few centuries, extended to large parts of the world. As you will discover in higher grades, European powers — in particular, Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, and Netherlands — established colonies across Africa, Asia, the Americas, Australia and many Pacific islands, after conquering large parts of those regions of the world. Often, the conquests were achieved through military campaigns that involved the massacre or **enslavement** of native populations.

Enslavement: Turning someone into a slave.

What impelled those nations to undertake such campaigns? Political competition between European powers created a race for territorial expansion and global influence. Territorial expansion had obvious economic advantages: access to new natural resources, new markets and new trade routes — and, often, plunder, as we will see. Converting indigenous populations to Christianity was another powerful motivation. A lesser one, but significant nonetheless, was scientific inquiry — the

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Demonise: To falsely portray an individual or a group of people in a very negative light.

desire to explore unknown lands so as to accumulate knowledge of the planet's geography and natural history.

While colonisers often claimed they had the 'civilising mission' of bringing 'progress' to the colonised peoples, who were often **demonised** as 'savage', 'primitive' or 'barbaric', the reality was very different: loss of independence, exploitation of resources

Fig. 4.3. A cartoon depicting a British business magnate straddling Africa while he holds a telegraph wire (Edward Linley Sambourne in Punch magazine, London, 1892).

by the colonisers, the destruction of traditional ways of life, and the imposition of foreign cultural values. It is true that the colonial age brought the world together, saw a rapid growth of economies and technologies, but the benefits were mostly for the colonisers; many historical studies have documented the immense hardships that the colonised people had to endure.

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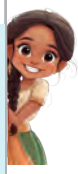
LET'S EXPLORE



What do you think the cartoon (Fig. 4.3) is trying to express? (Keep in mind that the telegraph, which permitted instant communications for the first time, was then a recent invention.) Analyse different elements of the drawing.

In many of the colonised regions, resistance built up against the colonisers. The phenomenon of colonialism declined in the mid-20th century, especially after World War II; many factors contributed to rapid worldwide decolonisation, with most colonised countries attaining independence. Here, however, we will focus on the special case of India.

EUROPEANS IN INDIA

India traded with the Greeks and the Romans over two millennia ago. Indian goods — spices, cotton, ivory, gems, sandalwood, teakwood, wootz steel, among other commodities — were highly sought after in the Mediterranean world. Until the 16th century CE, when European powers began sailing to the Indian Subcontinent, India was a vibrant economic and cultural powerhouse. Historical estimates (by economist Angus Maddison, in particular) suggest that India contributed at least one-fourth of the world **GDP** during this whole period, making it one of the two largest economies globally alongside China (whose contribution was of the same order). It is remarkable that from the 16th century onward, many European travellers to India described her as 'flourishing' and noted her manufacturing capabilities, diverse agricultural output, and extensive internal as well as external trading networks. However, this economic prosperity also made India an attractive target for European colonial ambitions.

Let us survey Europe's first colonial powers in India.

The Portuguese: commerce and atrocities

The Portuguese explorer and navigator Vasco da Gama's arrival at Kappad (near Kozhikode in Kerala) in May 1498 paved the way for the beginning of European colonisation in India.

GDP: Abbreviation of 'gross domestic product', a measure of the value of goods and services a country (or the world, in this case) produces in one year.

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A few centuries ago, the port town of Ullal (in present-day southern Karnataka) was an important trading point controlled by Rani Abbakka I. In the latter half of the 16th century, the Portuguese repeatedly attempted to take it over, but Rani Abbakka I formed strategic alliances with neighbouring kingdoms and thwarted their attempts. She was eventually captured and died fighting in prison. Her successor Rani Abbakka II is reported to have created fireballs out of coconut shells and set several ships of the Portuguese navy on fire. Their inspirational stories are remembered even today through the Yakṣhagāna, a traditional form of dance-drama.

Though he was well received, his aggressive ways failed to establish friendly relations with the local rulers. During his second voyage four years later, he seized, tortured and killed Indian merchants, and bombarded Calicut from the sea. The Portuguese captured strategic ports, including Goa (in 1510), which became the capital of their colony in India, as well as several trading posts along the Malabar and Coromandel coasts.

The Portuguese implemented a system known as *cartaz* (pass), requiring all ships in the Arabian Sea to purchase Portuguese permits for navigation. Ships without these permits were seized. This naval dominance allowed them to monopolise the spice trade between India and Europe for nearly a century.

Alongside commercial exploitation, the Portuguese presence in western India was characterised by religious persecution. In Goa, they established the **Inquisition** in 1560, which severely persecuted Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and Christian converts suspected of practising their original faith. Such

Inquisition: A tribunal set up by the Roman Catholic Church to judge heretics (i.e. Christians suspected of holding opinions contrary to the Church's doctrine). Over some 600 years, across Europe many thousands of supposed heretics were tortured and executed.

Fig. 4.4. A plaque in Kozhikode marking Vasco da Gama's arrival in 1498

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persecution was accompanied by forced conversions and the destruction of many Hindu temples, among other forms of abuse of the native population. (The Goa Inquisition was only abolished in 1812.)

The Dutch: commerce and competition

The Dutch arrived in India in the early 17th century and, unlike the Portuguese, focused primarily on commercial dominance, particularly in the spice trade. They established a Dutch East India Company, with trading posts in various parts of India, including, on the west coast, Surat, Bharuch, Cochin (Kochi), and on the east coast Nagapattinam and Masulipatnam (present-day Machilipatnam). Their most significant presence was in the Malabar region of Kerala, where they displaced the Portuguese from several trading centres.

Fig. 4.5. A depiction of the surrender of Dutch forces to King Marthanda Varma of Travancore after the Battle of Colachel, 1741 CE (Padmanabhapuram Palace).

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The Dutch presence in India was ultimately limited; it declined significantly after their defeat at the Battle of Colachel in 1741, where the forces of Travancore under King Marthanda Varma decisively defeated the Dutch both on land and at sea (the Travancore kingdom was in the southern part of present-day Kerala). This battle was a rare instance of an Asian power successfully repelling a European colonial force.

The French: colonial ambitions

The French entered India later, establishing their first trading post at Surat in 1668 and subsequently at Pondicherry (present-day Puducherry) in 1674, where they established their East India Company (*Compagnie des Indes Orientales*) and developed ambitious plans to establish a French empire in India.

Dupleix, who served as Governor-General of French India from 1742 to 1754, pioneered several colonial strategies that would later be adopted by the British. In particular, he trained Indian soldiers in European military techniques, creating disciplined infantry soldiers known as *sepoys*. Dupleix also developed the strategy of indirect rule through puppet Indian rulers, who were installed through interventions in local succession disputes.

The French colonial ambitions in India were ultimately checked during the Carnatic Wars (1746–1763), a series of conflicts between Britain and France. Despite initial successes under Dupleix, who captured Madras (present-day Chennai) in 1746, the French ultimately lost ground to the British and their colony was reduced to Pondicherry and a few smaller enclaves.

Like the Dutch, and unlike the Portuguese, the French colonial powers did not much intervene in Indians' social and religious life. A rare exception was the destruction in 1748 of Pondicherry's large Vedapurishwaran temple, ordered by Dupleix on the persistent request of Pondicherry's Jesuit priests and Dupleix's own wife, with a view to asserting the dominance of Christianity. Generally, however, the French had to be content with a modest amount of trade with India.

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Fig. 4.6. A 1764 plan of Pondicherry showing the city enclosed in fortifications and grid planning. The large structure facing the sea (at the bottom) was the fort. (The top of the plan points to the west.)

Enter the British

Britain dominated the Indian subcontinent for nearly two centuries. How did this happen? Many books have dissected the methods of the British rulers; we will not attempt to tell a complete story, but will focus on the main aspects of their colonial presence in India.

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From traders to rulers

The British conquest of India is one of history's most remarkable examples of how a trading company could transform into an imperial power. Unlike classic conquests, the British takeover of India was gradual, calculated, and often disguised as commercial enterprise rather than military invasion.

The English East India Company was established as a trading company and was granted a royal charter by Queen Elizabeth I, which gave it special powers — to raise a private army, for instance. Nevertheless, its agents initially kept up a pretence of being mere traders, which allowed them, in the 17th century, to establish footholds along India's coast with minimal resistance: Surat, Madras, Bombay and Calcutta among the first. Local rulers did not mind these trading posts, as they generally welcomed foreign trade (which, let us recall, was a longstanding practice in India). These modest beginnings concealed the Company's long-term ambitions.

LET US EXPLORE

Before you read further, have a good look at the painting on the first page of this chapter. It was specially ordered for the London headquarters of the East India Company and is over three metres long. Observe every aspect of it — the people in it, the objects, the symbols and the attitudes. Form groups of four or five students and let each group present its conclusions as regards the messages the painting conveys.

(You will find our answers a few pages down, when we return to the painting, but avoid looking at them right now!)

The strategy of 'divide and rule'

While maintaining an appearance of traders, the Company's agents cultivated political relationships with local rulers, offering military support to some against their rivals, thus inserting themselves into Indian political conflicts and emerging as power brokers rather than foreign invaders. They would also

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play on rivalries between regional rulers or succession disputes within ruling houses, so as to benefit from these conflicts — the 'divide and rule' policy. The British were equally skilled at exploiting existing divisions within Indian society: they identified and often encouraged tensions between religious communities, for instance.

Fig. 4.7. Clive leading the East India Company's troops at Plassey, 1757 (painting by William Heath, 1821)

The Battle of Plassey (1757) exemplifies this approach. When tensions arose between Siraj-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Bengal, and the East India Company officials led by Robert Clive, the latter identified disgruntled elements within the Nawab's court. Clive hatched a conspiracy with Mir Jafar, the Nawab's military commander, promising to install him as the new Nawab in exchange for his betrayal. The battle took place at Palashi (Plassey as the British spelt it), some 150 kilometres north of present-day Kolkata. Some French forces assisted the Nawab, but Mir Jafar's forces — constituting the majority of the Nawab's army — stood aside, ensuring a British victory despite their smaller number. Even today, 'Mir Jafar' in India remains a synonym for 'traitor'!

By positioning themselves as a kingmaker, the East India Company gradually established control over increasingly large territories. In the 19th century, it went a step further and introduced the infamous **Doctrine of Lapse**, according to which any princely state would be annexed if its ruler died

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without a natural male heir. This deliberately disregarded the Hindu tradition of adoption, which was a legitimate means of succession in Indian royal houses.

DON'T MISS OUT

In the Indian context, a princely state was a region that remained under the rule of an Indian prince, maharaja or nawab, but which had accepted British protection and guidance in exchange for maintaining internal autonomy. There were hundreds of them, from large ones (such as Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore or Jammu & Kashmir) to smaller ones. At the time of India's Independence, there were over 500 princely states, covering about 40 per cent of the Subcontinent.

The Doctrine of Lapse led to the annexation of numerous states, contributing to the expansion of the territorial control of the British. This created much resentment in sections of Indian society and contributed to the 1857 Rebellion (to which we return below).

Another stratagem (known as '**subsidiary alliance**') was to install a British 'Resident' in the courts of Indian rulers to protect them against internal or external threats; in exchange, they would have to maintain British troops at their own expense and conduct foreign relations only through the British. While appearing to preserve the sovereignty of princely states, the system effectively transferred real power to the British while burdening Indian rulers with the costs of their own subjugation!

The ruler of Hyderabad was among the first to enter such an alliance in 1798; several others soon followed. These so-called alliances allowed the British to control vast territories without the administrative costs of direct rule, creating what was called 'an empire on the cheap'. Once a state entered the system, exiting it was virtually impossible, as any attempt to break free would face overwhelming British military response.

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From Paradise to Hell?

Devastating famines

A few years after its victory at Plassey, the East India Company secured the right to collect revenue in Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha — some of India's richest regions. Clive described Bengal in particular as 'the **paradise** of the earth'. The Company's agents extracted maximum revenue while investing minimally in governance or development, with devastating consequences for the population.

Paradise: In a religious context, heaven. Here, an ideal, wealthy or perfectly happy place.

In 1770–1772, coming on top of two years of crop failure, the harsh revenue collection targets imposed by the East India Company in Bengal — requiring farmers to pay a high rate of cash taxes on the produce of their lands, regardless of harvest conditions — caused a catastrophic famine which killed nearly one-third of its population or an estimated 10 million people. In fact, the Company maintained harsh revenue collection targets, even increasing the land tax during the famine. Such cruelty was denounced later not only by Indian personalities but by some British officials and public intellectuals (such as William Digby whom we quoted at the start of this chapter). For instance, a century later, W.W. Hunter, an official, wrote:

> "While the country every year became a total waste, the English government constantly demanded an increased land-tax. ... All through the stifling summer of 1770 the people went on dying. The husbandmen [farmers] sold their cattle; they sold their implements of agriculture; they devoured their seed-grain; they sold their sons and daughters, till at length no buyer of children could be found; they ate the leaves of trees and the grass of the field. ... Day and night a torrent of famished and disease-stricken wretches poured into the great cities."

Such tragic famines were going to recur throughout the British rule in India. During the Great Famine of 1876–1878, for instance, up to 8 million Indians perished, mostly in the Deccan plateau.

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Fig. 4.8. Grain bags on Madras beach, ready for export, while people were dying of hunger in large numbers.

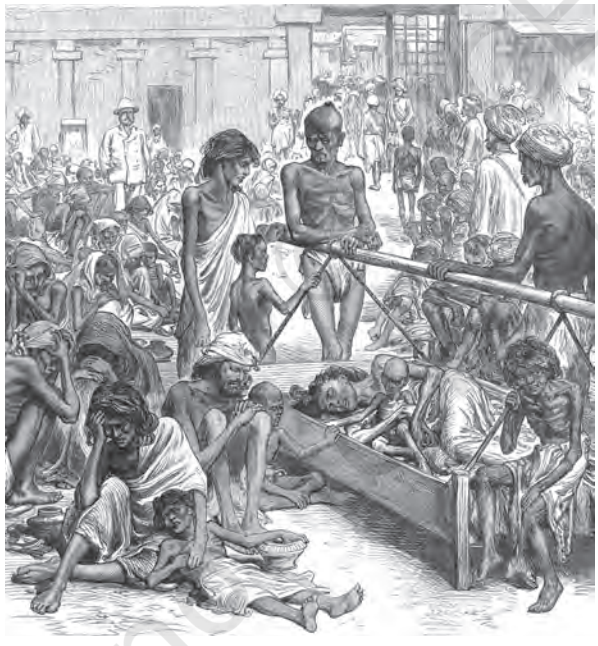

Fig. 4.9. People waiting for famine relief in Bangalore (today Bengaluru) during the 1877 famine (Illustrated London News)

Disregarding the severity of the crisis, some Indian traders would hold on to their stocks in the hope of price rise, causing an artificial scarcity, and the British administration continued to export grain to Britain — about one million tonnes of rice alone per year during the three years of the famine (Fig. 4.8).

Apart from the factors mentioned above, the British economic policy of 'free market', which left prices of commodities free to fluctuate, contributed to the severity of the famines. Thus Lord Lytton, Viceroy of India during the 1876–1878 famine, issued an order that "there is to be no interference of any kind on the part of the Government with the object of reducing the price of food." At the same time, in 1876, at

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the height of the Great Famine, Lytton organised an extravagant durbar in Delhi which involved 'a week-long feast for 68,000 officials, satraps and maharajas'.

Precise numbers of severe famines during the entire British rule vary from a dozen to over 20. According to several Famine Commissions and other reports, it has been estimated that the total number of human victims ('human' since millions of cattle and other animals also died) is anywhere between 50 and 100 million — nearly the number of deaths caused by World War II.

The British administration did open famine relief camps in some cities (Fig. 4.9), but far too few and with inadequate supplies. Some officials argued that famine relief should be deliberately kept very low; the Famine Commission of 1878–80, for example, stated: "The doctrine that in time of famine the poor are entitled to demand relief ... would probably lead to the doctrine that they are entitled to such relief at all times."

We should note that famines in India had occurred throughout history, caused by droughts, floods, military campaigns and other factors, but never on such a scale. During the colonial era, India, especially rural India, sank into deep poverty and never recovered.

The drain of India's wealth

As we saw earlier, economic exploitation of India formed the foundation of British colonial policy. In 1895, the U.S. historian and political scientist Brooks Adams noted:

> "Very soon after [the Battle of] Plassey, the Bengal plunder began to arrive in London, and the effect appears to have been instantaneous, for all authorities agree that the 'industrial revolution' ... began with the year 1760. ... Possibly since the world began no investment has ever yielded the profit reaped from the Indian plunder."

In other words, according to Adams, the Industrial Revolution in Britain, which required much investment, was made possible at least partly by the 'stolen wealth from India' (this phrase is by the U.S. historian Will Durant).

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House of Commons is the name for the elected lower house of the bicameral parliament of the United Kingdom. Dadabhai Naoroji was the first Indian to be elected to the British House of Commons.

Taking his cue from scholars such as Adams and Digby, Dadabhai Naoroji, a respected political figure, authored in 1901 *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*, in which he compiled from British reports the wealth estimated to have been drained out of India. About the same time, Romesh Chunder Dutt, a historian, did a similar exercise in his *Economic History of India*. All these studies showed that the colonisers had extracted many billions of pounds from India. A more recent estimate (by Utsa Patnaik) for the period 1765 to 1938 comes to 45 trillion U.S. dollars (in today's value), or about 13 times Britain's GDP in 2023! This was extracted not just through taxes, but by charging Indians for the colonial power's expenditures on building the railways, the telegraph network, and even on wars!

Had this wealth remained invested in India, it would have been a very different country when it attained Independence.

LET'S EXPLORE

Why do you think Dadabhai Naoroji means by 'un-British rule in India'? (*Hint: he was an MP in the* **House of Commons** *in 1892.*)

Fig. 4.10. Brooks Adams

Fig. 4.11. William Digby

Fig. 4.12. Dadabhai Naoroji

Fig. 4.13. R.C. Dutt

THINK ABOUT IT

Let us return to this painting (Fig. 4.14), but now with some clues to its symbolism. Note how Britannia (a symbolic

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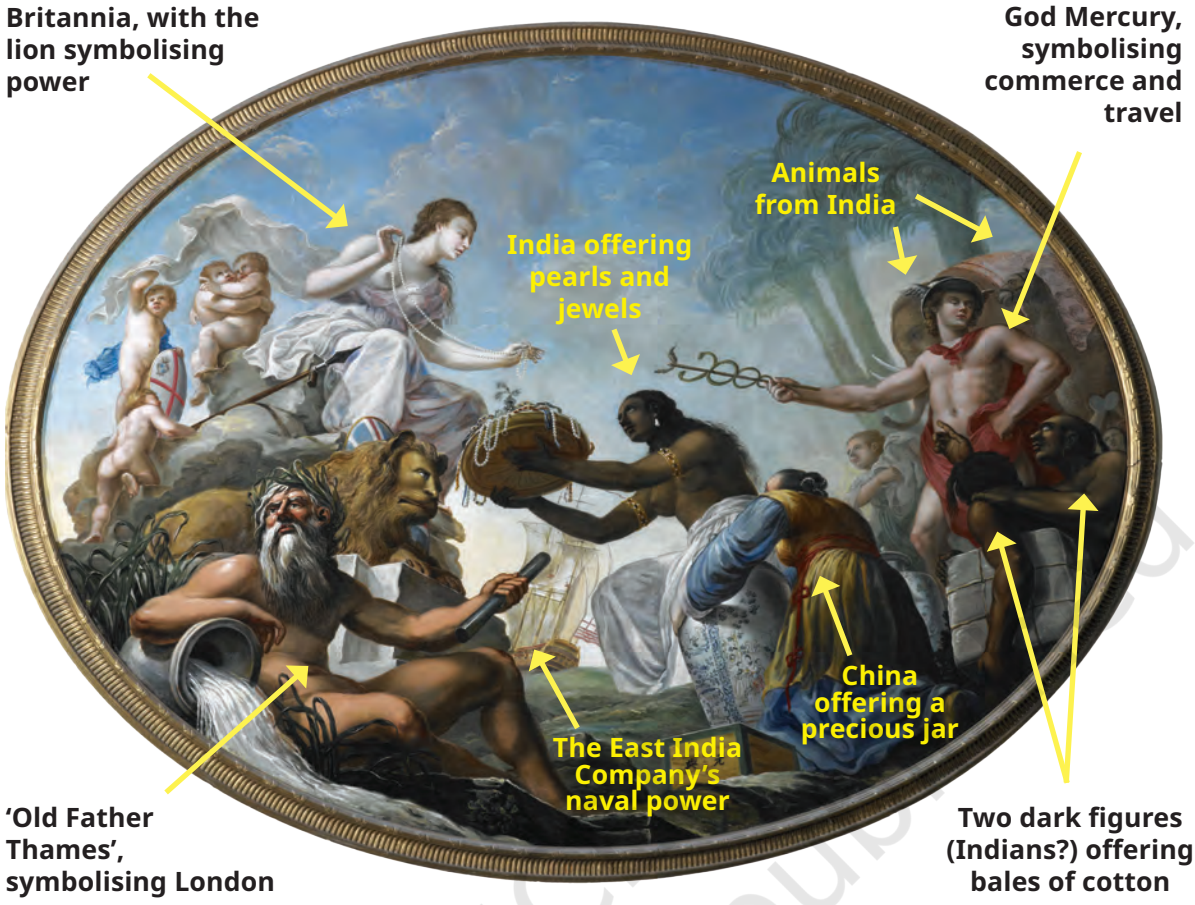

Fig. 4.14. 'The East offering its riches to Britannia' — making sense of the painting's symbolism

figure for Britain) sits higher than the colonies, pointing to her superior power; contrast with the lower position and bent posture of the colonies. Did they really 'offer' their wealth? Or did Britain seize it by force or ruse? Note also the Indians' dark complexion (in contrast with that of Britannia), reflecting the belief in the superiority of white people over the dark-skinned 'natives'.

Changing Landscapes

The expanding colonial rule impacted nearly every aspect of Indian life, as the rulers were convinced that India should be reshaped according to their 'superior' conceptions. Let us briefly look at a few of those impacts.

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Decline of India's indigenous industries

Embossed: With a design stamped on the cloth in such a way that it stands out in relief.

Before the 18th century, India was renowned for its manufacturing capabilities, particularly in textiles — cotton, silk, wool, jute, hemp and coir being the chief ones. Indian cotton textiles, in particular, with rich and intricate designs, bright colours, and textures ranging from ultra-thin muslins to richly **embossed** fabrics were in high demand in many parts of the world.

LET'S EXPLORE

Do you understand all the terms used above to list and describe Indian textiles? If not, form groups of four or five and try to find out more, then compare your findings with the help of your teacher.

British policy imposed heavy duties on Indian textiles imported into Britain while forcing India to accept British manufactured goods with minimal tariffs. Moreover, Britain now controlled most of the sea trade as well as exchange rates, so Indian traders found it difficult to export as earlier. The result was the ruin of Indian textile industry. In the 19th century, India's textile exports fell sharply, while Britain's imports into India grew even more sharply. Communities of skilled artisans who had practised their craft for generations were reduced to poverty and forced to return to subsistence agriculture on increasingly overtaxed land. As William Bentinck, then Governor-General of India, observed in 1834, "The bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India."

Similar scenarios unfolded for India's manufactures of iron, steel, paper and other goods. India's share of the world GDP kept declining throughout the colonial rule, reaching hardly 5 per cent at the time of Independence. In less than two centuries, one of the richest lands of the world had become one of the poorest.

Dismantling traditional governance structures

Before British colonisation, India possessed well-organised systems of local self-governance. Village councils managed

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community affairs, resolved disputes, and organised public works such as irrigation, roads, etc. Regional kingdoms maintained complex administrative structures that had evolved over centuries to address local needs and conditions. Charles Metcalfe, an acting Governor-General in the 1830s, described the system and its efficiency in this important statement:

> "The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves. They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down; revolution succeeds to revolution; but the village community remains the same. ... This union of the village communities, each one forming a separate little state in itself, has contributed more than any other cause to the preservation of the people of India."

The British systematically dismantled these indigenous governance systems, replacing them with a centralised bureaucracy designed primarily to facilitate tax collection and maintain order, rather than promote public welfare. This transformation destroyed centuries-old mechanisms of community decision-making.

The introduction of British codes of law disregarded customary laws and practices that had governed Indian communities for generations. While presented as modernisation, this imposition of a foreign system unsuited to India alienated ordinary Indians from the judicial system, creating courts that were expensive, time-consuming, and conducted in a foreign language.

Transforming Indian education: creating 'brown Englishmen'

Education became a powerful tool for the creation of a class of Indians who would serve British interests. In earlier centuries, India had diverse educational traditions — *pāṭhaśhālās, madrasās, vihāras,* and many forms of apprenticeship learning. These institutions transmitted not only practical knowledge but also cultural values and traditions. Even in the early 19th century,

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British reports reported hundreds of thousands of village schools across India (for instance, 100,000 to 150,000 of them in Bengal and Bihar up to 1830!) "where young natives are taught reading, writing and arithmetic, upon a system so economical, … and at the same time so simple and effectual…"

Orientalist: A largely obsolete term to designate a scholar of the 'Orient', that is, regions from West Asia to the Far East. In India, Orientalists (now called 'Indologists') were often scholars of Sanskrit, Pali, Persian and other languages.

A sharp turning point in India's educational history was marked by the notorious 1835 '**Minute on Indian Education**' of British historian and politician, Thomas B. Macaulay. In it, although he admitted that he had "no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic," he expressed his conviction that European knowledge was vastly superior to India's: "I have never found one among them [**Orientalists**] who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." Indians, therefore needed British education, whose objective would be to create a class of Indians who would be "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect."

Although a few prominent British Orientalists argued that Indian students should be left to study in their own languages, Macaulay's policy gained the upper hand and India's traditional schools slowly disappeared, while English became a language of prestige associated with the colonial masters, resulting in lasting divisions in Indian society between English-educated elites and the masses.

The new education system served multiple colonial objectives. It created a pool of Indian clerks and minor officials who could staff the lower ranks of the colonial administration at a fraction of the cost of British personnel. It also sidelined traditional sources of knowledge and authority, creating generations of Indians disconnected from their own cultural heritage.

THINK ABOUT IT

What exactly did Macaulay mean when he wrote that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia"? And why should he want to make Indians "English in taste, in

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opinions, in morals, and in intellect"? How does this relate to the 'civilising mission' mentioned at the start of the chapter? Ask your teacher to guide a class debate on these questions.

Reshaping economic structures to serve imperial needs

The British transformed India's economy from a self-sufficient agricultural system supplemented by craft and manufacture production into a supplier of raw materials for British industry and a market forced to buy British goods. Without going into the technical details of this economic transformation, let us take the example of the construction of India's vast railway network, often cited as a colonial blessing. While the railways did bring people closer together and integrated India's internal market, it was designed primarily to move raw materials from the interior to ports for export and to distribute British manufactured goods throughout India. Railway routes largely ignored existing trade

Fig. 4.15. A steam locomotive of the Madras Railway (one of the companies operating the rail network in British India) in 1860

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patterns to serve colonial economic interests. Another purpose was to move armies quickly from their cantonments if they had to fight a distant rebellion or war.

Besides, the construction of India's railways was not a gift from the colonial rulers to India. Most of it was paid for by Indian tax revenue, which means that Indian funded infrastructure that primarily served British strategic and commercial interests, instead of being focused on serving the people's needs. The same can be said of the telegraph network.

Even the administrative costs of colonialism were borne by Indian subjects. The colonial administrative apparatus, military installations, and the lavish lifestyles of British officials in India were all financed by Indian taxation. In short, Indians funded their own subjugation.

Early Resistance Movements: Challenging Colonial Authority

India was such an enormous source of wealth, natural and human resources for the British that they nicknamed her 'the jewel in the crown of the British Empire'. And they asserted that India would forever remain part of the British Empire, "on which the sun never sets."

THINK ABOUT IT

What is meant by "the sun never sets on the British Empire"? Do you think this was a correct statement?

However, almost from the beginning of the British conquest of India, resistance movements manifested to try and repel this self-imposed 'guest'. We will briefly survey a few such movements, but before we do so, let us have a good look at the map of the British Indian Empire (Fig. 4.16). The red and pink territories are those directly under British administration, while the yellow ones are the princely states we discussed earlier. (The black lines stand for the railway lines.)

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Fig. 4.16. A map of the British Indian Empire in 1909

LET'S EXPLORE

Examine the map. What are the main differences with the map of today's India, in terms both of borders and of names?

The 'Sannyasi-Fakir rebellion'

One of the earliest organised resistance movements, often called the 'the Sannyasi (or Sannyasi-Fakir) Rebellion', began in Bengal after the terrible famine of 1770. Groups of sannyasis (Hindu ascetics) and fakirs (Muslim ascetics), who

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traditionally travelled freely for pilgrimage and charity, found their movements restricted by the British East India Company policies, especially by the new land and taxation policies. The precise motivations of the sannyasis and fakirs have been debated, but over the next three decades they attacked British treasuries and tax collectors. The British called them 'bandits', executed some of them and used their superior forces to eventually defeat them. This rebellion later inspired the Bengali writer Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel *Anandamath* (1882); it contained the song 'Vande Mātaram', which would inspire Indians during the struggle for freedom in the early 20th century and, after Independence, became India's national song.

Tribal uprisings

India's tribal communities faced unique threats as the British expanded into forests and hills, disrupting their traditional way of life. The British described tribals as 'primitive', restricted their access to forests and forest produce, sometimes acquiring tribal land or turning it into private property, imposing cash taxes, catching tribals in debt traps, replacing traditional tribal councils with the British legal system and encouraging missionaries to 'civilise' and convert tribals to Christianity. Besides, a colonial law categorised hundreds of tribal communities as 'criminal tribes', causing them to be unjustly harassed for decades.

Some of the above abuse led some tribes to rise in rebellion against the colonial power. Among the first such events, the **Kol Uprising** (1831–1832) in Chota Nagpur (in present-day Jharkhand) started when the British introduced land policies that favoured outsiders over the original tribal inhabitants. The Kol tribes (which included the Mundas and Oraons, among others) temporarily established their control over significant territory before being defeated by the British forces. The **Santhal Rebellion** of 1855–1856, a widespread uprising of the Santhal people across parts of present-day Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal, was led by two brothers, Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu, and rebelled against moneylenders and landlords who were taking away their ancestral lands with British support. The Santhals

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declared their own government and vowed to 'fight to the last drop of blood'. The British response was brutal; after some initial losses, they burned entire villages and killed thousands of Santhals, including, eventually, the rebel leaders. However, the daring Santhal rebellion inspired other tribal communities to resist colonial rule.

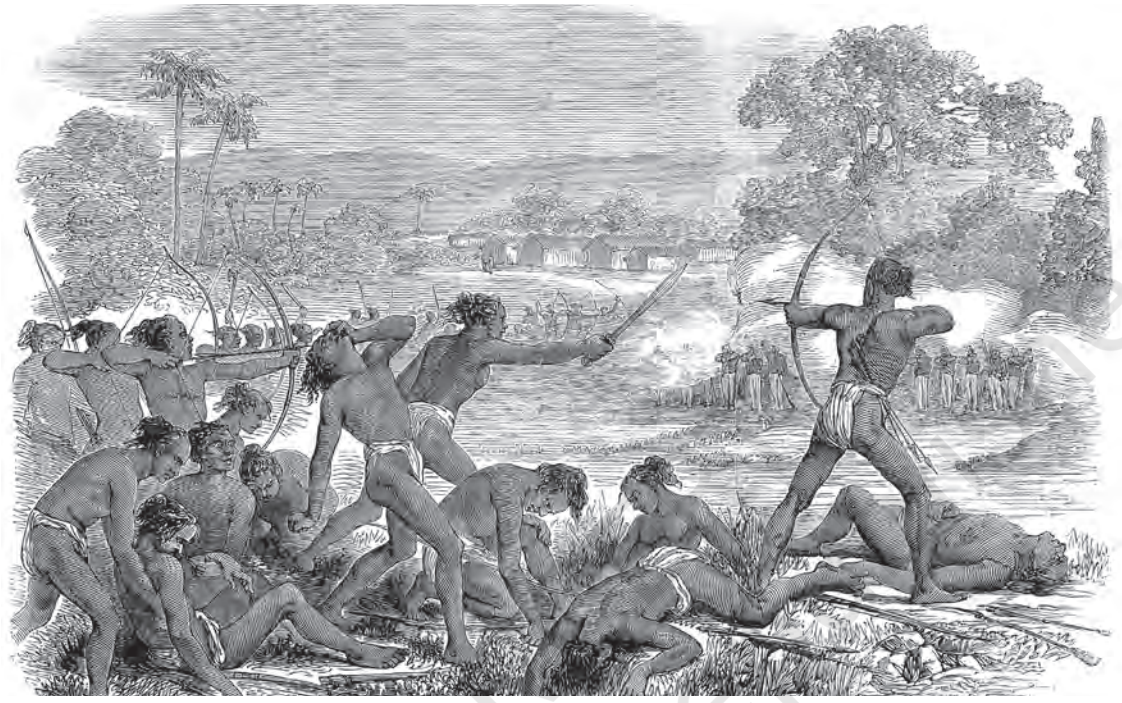

Fig. 4.17. An 1856 sketch in the Illustrated London News depicting an unequal confrontation between Santhal rebels and gun-wielding sepoys

LET'S EXPLORE

Note how the Santhals are depicted in the 1856 sketch (Fig. 4.17) drawn from an artist's imagination: observe their complexion, dress, weapons and draw your conclusions as regards the image this depiction would create in the popular mind in Britain.

Peasant uprisings against economic exploitation

Even without famines, peasants suffered under the unfair British revenue collections, often losing their lands to moneylenders or new landlords. The **Indigo Revolt** (1859–1862)

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illustrates this exploitation. European planters forced peasants in the northern parts of Bengal to abandon food crops and, instead, grow indigo plants, as the indigo dye was then in great demand in Europe. From planters to traders, everyone earned huge profits — except the peasants, who were so poorly paid that they got trapped in debt slavery. When they refused to grow indigo, they faced imprisonment, torture, and destruction of their property. Their uprising was directed mostly at the planters, who retaliated by hiring mercenaries to attack the peasants. Their cause was supported by educated Bengalis and the Bengali press; the British authorities were eventually forced to restrict some of the worst abuses.

LET'S EXPLORE

Indigo is a natural deep blue pigment used in dyeing. Can you think of other natural substances that have been traditionally used in India to dye cloth?

There are several more notable examples of uprisings across the Subcontinent, which, along with the other aspects of the British rule that we saw earlier, built up to the largest uprising of the 19th century. Let us turn to it.

Mutiny: In this context, mutiny refers to a rebellion by soldiers, or sailors in the case of a navy, against their officers.

The Great Rebellion of 1857

The British called it the 'Sepoy Mutiny'. 'Sepoys', let us recall, were the Indian soldiers enrolled in the East India company's British Army; its officers, of course, were almost all British. After India's Independence, historians rejected the term 'Sepoy **Mutiny**', proposing a few others instead; following many scholars, we will call the event the 'Great Rebellion of 1857'. But what exactly happened?

LET'S EXPLORE

Why do you think was the term 'Sepoy Mutiny' rejected after Indian Independence? Write one paragraph explaining your reasons.

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Fig. 4.18. Imaginary depiction of the sepoys' rebellion at Meerut (Illustrated London News, 1857)

Even earlier, there were several signs of severe discontent among the sepoys, beginning with the so-called 'Vellore Mutiny' of 1806, which erupted when the British introduced new uniform regulations that violated the religious practices of both Hindu and Muslim sepoys. For example, they were forbidden from wearing religious marks on their foreheads and were required to shave their beards. The sepoys seized the Vellore fort (in present-day Tamil Nadu) and killed many British officers and troops; the British however crushed the revolt, killing or executing hundreds of sepoys.

We should also keep in mind that most sepoys were from agricultural families, which had been suffering great hardship owing to the British policies on land revenue. After decades of increasing frustration, in 1857 rumours spread across northern and central India that rifle cartridges were greased with cow and pig fat, offending the Hindu and Muslim sepoys' religious sensibilities. At Barrackpore (in present-day West Bengal), the sepoy Mangal Pandey attacked British officers. His execution spread further discontent among the sepoys. In Meerut (in

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present-day Uttar Pradesh), some of them killed their British officers and marched to nearby Delhi, where they proclaimed the elderly but politically powerless Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar as their leader (his 'empire' was limited to a small area in Delhi). The military decisions were, however, taken by the commanders. The revolt quickly spread across northern and central India, with sepoys capturing key cities like Kanpur, Lucknow and Jhansi. At Kanpur, rebel forces under Nana Saheb initially agreed to give safe passage to British civilians, but then massacred over 200 men, women and children for reasons that are still debated.

The British response was systematic and extremely brutal, beginning with the recapture of Delhi in September 1857, where the British forces conducted house-to-house massacres. At Kanpur, they conducted mass executions designed to strike terror in the population. In a long punitive campaign they burned villages and destroyed crops, causing countless deaths — vastly more than those inflicted by the rebels.

According to some historians, the Great Rebellion failed because the sepoys lacked a unified command and a consistent strategy, despite some heroic leaders.

The uprising failed, but it marked a turning point, especially in sowing a seed for the idea that foreign domination was unacceptable. The seed would grow early in the 20th century into a full-fledged struggle for freedom, though with different methods. Meantime, in 1858, the British Crown took direct control of India from the East India Company, initiating the period of the British Raj. British policies shifted from aggressive territorial expansion to consolidation of control. The Indian Army was reorganised so as to prevent unified resistance in the future.

The Legacy of European Colonialism in India

The European (mostly British) conquest and rule of India was not a 'civilising mission' — India's own civilisation was much older than Europe's. It was a process of subjugation and

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Two heroines

Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi fought bravely to save her kingdom from British annexation; assisted by the Maratha Tatia (or Tantia) Tope, Nana Saheb's military adviser, Rani Lakshmibai managed to escape a besieged Jhansi and to conquer the Gwalior fort, seizing the treasury and the arsenal. She was killed on 18 June 1858 on the battlefield. The British army officer who commanded the attack on Jhansi noted that the Rani was "remarkable for her beauty, cleverness, perseverance [and] generosity to her subordinates. These qualities, combined with her rank, rendered her most dangerous of all the rebel leaders. ... [She was the] best and bravest of the rebels." Tatia Tope continued fighting until early 1859 but was betrayed and handed over to the British, who hanged him.

Fig. 4.19. A miniature portrait of Rani Lakshmibai (1853 or earlier)

Fig. 4.20. Detail of a portrait of Begum Hazrat Mahal in the 1850s

Begum Hazrat Mahal of Awadh (north-central portion of Uttar Pradesh) also resisted the British-led resistance after her kingdom was annexed and joined the rebels during the 1857 uprising, leading the defence of Lucknow when the British attempted to recapture the city. She rejected British offers of safe passage if she surrendered and ultimately had to take refuge in nearby Nepal. In November 1858, Queen Victoria issued a proclamation marking the end of the East India Company's rule in India; she promised non-interference in religious matters and greater inclusion of Indians in the administration. Begum Hazrat Mahal issued a counter-proclamation, warning Indians not to trust such assurances, as "it is the unvarying custom of the English never to forgive a fault be it great or small."

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exploitation executed systematically, with brutal repression if necessary. Except for a small Indian elite who accepted British rule as inevitable, the Indians suffered the fate of many of the world's colonised populations: abuse, exploitation, violence and uprooting.

At the same time, the colonial rule had some largely unintended consequences. It opened (or re-opened) India to the world and the world to India. The British (and the French to a much smaller extent) were systematic in documenting every aspect of their conquest, from its geography (they conducted meticulous surveys of the Subcontinent). They created impressive lists of all ethnic groups, although the lists were flawed because of the unscientific but prevalent notions of 'race' (as genetics has shown, 'races' do not exist). They also documented India's monuments, studying their art and architecture, restoring some of the ruined ones, and initiating the discipline of archaeology. But in the process, they (and other colonial powers) stole thousands of statues, paintings, jewels, manuscripts and other cultural artefacts from India and sent them to European museums or private collections. While this represented a profound cultural loss and violation of India's heritage, it also promoted some appreciation of Indian art in the European public. Such massive theft took place over much of the colonised world; today, there are ongoing debates and efforts to repatriate some of these cultural treasures to their countries of origin.

LET'S EXPLORE

- → In the sentence "It opened (or re-opened) India to the world and the world to India", why do you think we added 're-opened'?
- → Some argue that stolen cultural heritage has been better preserved abroad than it would have been in India. What is your view on its repatriation? Discuss in groups.

Finally, although British scholars were not the first Europeans to master the Sanskrit language, they started publishing some of the

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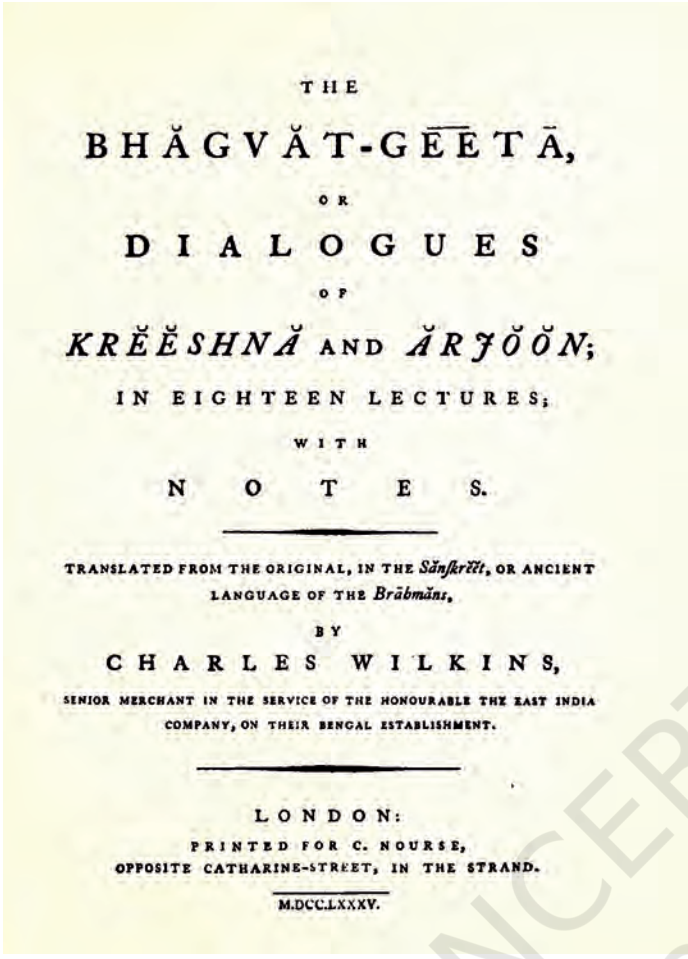

THE

BHĂGVĂT-GĒĒTĀ,

OR

DIALOGUES

OF

KRĔĔSHNĂ AND *ĂRJŎŎN*;

IN EIGHTEEN LECTURES;

WITH

NOTES.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL, IN THE *Sānskrēēt*, OR ANCIENT LANGUAGE OF THE *Brāhmăns*,

BY

CHARLES WILKINS,

SENIOR MERCHANT IN THE SERVICE OF THE HONOURABLE THE EAST INDIA COMPANY, ON THEIR BENGAL ESTABLISHMENT.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR C. NOURSE,

OPPOSITE CATHARINE-STREET, IN THE STRAND.

M.DCC.LXXXV.

Fig. 4.21. The title page of the first English translation (in 1785) of a Sanskrit text: 'The Bhagavad Gītā or Dialogues of Kṛiṣhṇa and Arjuna' (using modern spelling). The translator was Charles Wilkins.

first translations of Sanskrit texts into a European language; the French, the Germans and others soon followed. The motivations were mixed: some scholars were genuine students or admirers of India's ancient culture, while others were convinced that by studying Indian languages and texts, it would be easier to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity.

The spread of Sanskrit studies and texts in Europe (followed later by other Indian languages) was like the 'discovery of a new continent', in the words of the German philosopher Georg Hegel. Indian texts had a great impact on European philosophers, writers, poets, artists, and sometimes statesmen; this influence extended to the United States of America in the 19th century. This is a reminder that although political domination may flow in one direction, cultural influence sometimes flows in the opposite direction.

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Before we move on ...

- The Portuguese, the Dutch, the French and the British were attracted to India primarily because of her great wealth. They fought among themselves for dominance of the Subcontinent, with the British gaining the upper hand.
- The British ruthless taxation policy inflicted great misery on the people, causing severe famines in particular and millions of deaths. The deliberate deindustrialization of India devastated her once-thriving manufacturing sector.
- Gradually, the British imposed their administrative structures, legal systems and educational institutions to ensure total colonial control over the Indian society.
- The Portuguese focused on religious conversion and cultural transformation in Goa created long-lasting social divisions. The French policy of assimilation created a small elite of culturally French Indians in Pondicherry.
- Several uprisings took place from the late 18th century onward, with the Great Rebellion of 1857 threatening the colonial rule for a while. Most of these uprisings were brutally repressed.
- In the 19th century, India's classical culture (in particular through translated Sanskrit texts) flowed back to the West, creating a lasting influence.

Questions and activities

1. What is colonialism? Give three different definitions based on the chapter or on your knowledge.
2. Colonial rulers often claimed that their mission was to 'civilise' the people they ruled. Based on the evidence in this chapter, do you think this was true in the case of India? Why or why not?
3. How was the British approach to colonising India different from earlier European powers like the Portuguese or the French?

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4. “Indians funded their own subjugation.” What does this mean in the context of British infrastructure projects in India like the railway and telegraph networks?
5. What does the phrase ‘divide and rule’ mean? Give examples of how this was used by the British in India?
6. Choose one area of Indian life, such as agriculture, education, trade, or village life. How was it affected by colonial rule? Can you find any signs of those changes still with us today? Express your ideas through a short essay, a poem, a drawing, or a painting.
7. Imagine you are a reporter in 1857. Write a brief news report on Rani Lakshmibai’s resistance at Jhansi. Include a timeline or storyboard showing how the rebellion began, spread, and ended, highlighting key events and leaders.
8. Imagine an alternate history where India was never colonised by European powers. Write a short story of about 300 words exploring how India might have developed on its own path.
9. Role-play: Enact a historical discussion between a British official and an Indian personality like Dadabhai Naoroji on the British colonial rule in India.
10. Explore a local resistance movement (tribal, peasant, or princely) from your state or region during the colonial period. Prepare a report or poster describing:
    - What was the specific trigger, if any?
    - Who led the movement?
    - What were their demands?
    - How did the British respond?
    - How is this event remembered today (e.g., local festivals, songs, monuments)?

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Noodles

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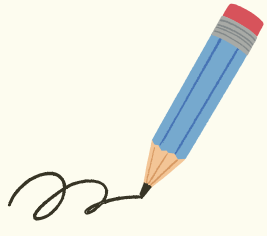
*‘Noodles’ is our abbreviation for ‘Notes and Doodles’!



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CHAPTER 5

Universal Franchise and India's Electoral System

[India] adopted the principle of adult franchise with an abundant faith in the common man and the ultimate success of democratic rule...never before in the history of the world has such an experiment been so boldly undertaken."

– Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar
November 1949, Constituent Assembly Debates

Fig. 5.1. Headlines of major newspapers during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections

The Big Questions

1. *What is universal adult franchise?*
2. *What is an electoral system?*
3. *How does India's electoral system work?*

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Fig. 5.2.

Universal Adult Franchise

Franchise: A right granted by the constitution or government. Another term that is used is 'suffrage' a synonym of franchise.

The Constitution makers decided that universal adult **franchise** would be a feature of Indian democracy right from the outset. This means that every adult citizen gets one vote, and all votes have equal value. Hence, every Indian citizen aged 18 and above has the right to vote — irrespective of caste, creed, race, religion, gender, education, income, etc. The word 'universal' connotes this.

LET'S EXPLORE

India changed the minimum age for voting from 21 to 18 in 1988. Discuss whether this was a good move.

Universal franchise is a cornerstone of Indian democracy. Elections to the Lok Sabha, the legislative assembly of every state and union territory, and all the local elections in villages and cities are based on universal franchise (Article 326 of the Constitution). Remember that no one can vote on another's behalf.

→ Can you calculate how long **you** have to wait before you can vote?

To be able to exercise your right, you need to be registered as a voter in your **constituency**. However, one is barred from voting if found guilty of committing certain serious crimes.

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Do you remember India had a general election in the summer of 2024? About 980 million voters were eligible to exercise their franchise for the 543 constituencies of the Lok Sabha.

Constituency: An area whose voters elect a representative to a legislative body.

DON'T MISS OUT

India has 3.1 million elected representatives (1.3 million of them women) in more than 250,000 local government bodies across India. All these are democratically elected through universal adult franchise.

We need an elaborate and well-organised system to manage this massive exercise and ensure that the elections take place fairly and freely. In this chapter, we will briefly explore who can vote, a few of the types of elections we have, the electoral **system**, and how it is organised.

System: A group of interconnected or interdependent elements that work together to achieve a common purpose or function.

DON'T MISS OUT

- → Before Independence, only 13 per cent of Indians were allowed to vote, and franchise was not universal. We will delve more into this in another part of the textbook.
- → India was among the early nations to grant women the right to vote, ahead of many others around the world. For example, women were given the right to vote in Switzerland only in 1971. Women fought long and hard in many countries to win this fundamental democratic right. In India, on the other hand, a progressive constitutional vision and deep democratic values rooted in India's ancient traditions ensured women had voting rights from the very beginning.

Fig. 5.3. Women's suffrage parade, USA, 1913

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LET'S EXPLORE

In 1947, our literacy rate was about 14 per cent, only about 8 per cent among women. Some argued that the right to vote should be given only to literate people. Discuss in your group why the Constitution makers may have decided on universal franchise from the time of Independence itself.

There are several reasons why universal franchise is so important. A few are illustrated in the mindmap below. Can you add some more?

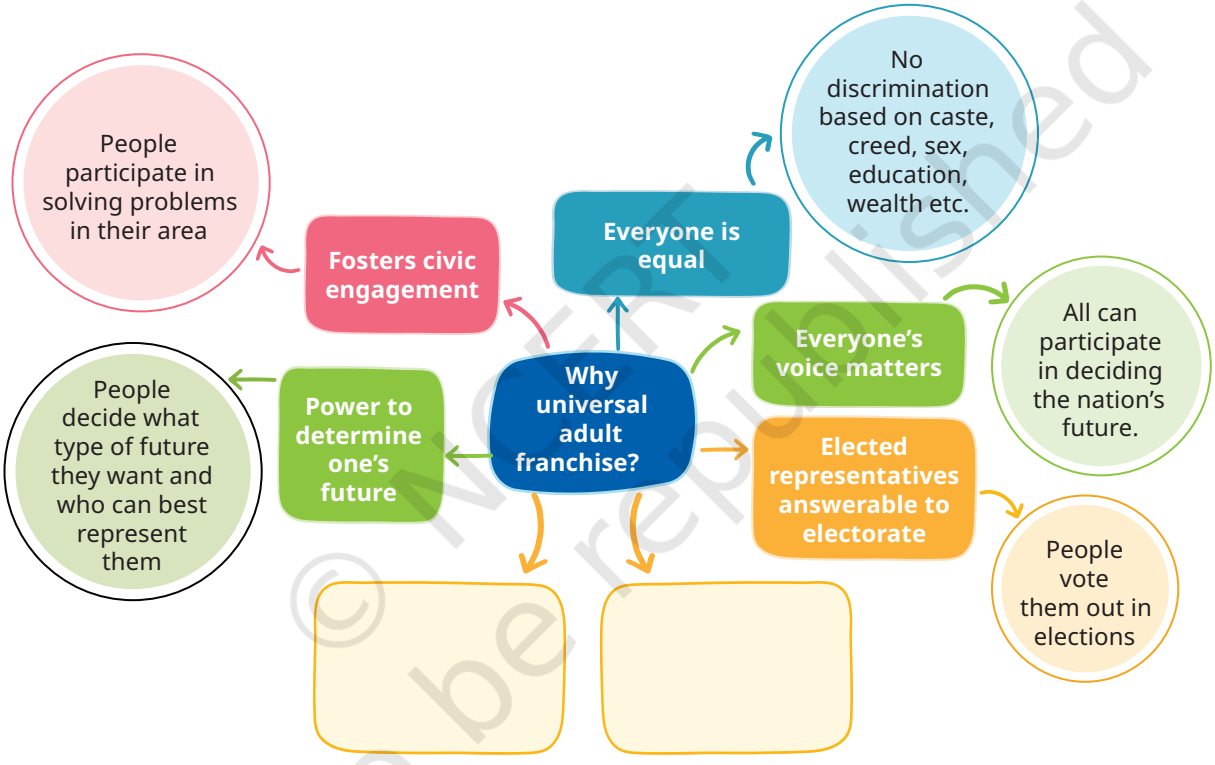

Fig. 5.4. Importance of universal franchise in a democracy. Add two reasons of your own in the empty boxes.

Bridging Barriers, Enabling Participation: Ensuring Universal Franchise

Democracy thrives when every eligible citizen can freely and fairly participate in the electoral process. Voting in elections is a powerful way for people to express their will. How does this take place in India?

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India is a large, diverse, and complex country. To illustrate, the population of eligible voters in India is fifteen times the population of the United Kingdom, and in terms of area, India is six times larger than France. Geographic diversity is a challenge, too. Thus, elections in India need to be organised taking this complexity into account.

The Election Commission of India organises elections in India. (We will learn more about ECI later in the chapter.) The ECI has taken several innovative accessibility measures to remove barriers to exercising the franchise and ensure no voter is left behind.

Electoral officials travel to remote locations to ensure every citizen can exercise their democratic right. In 2024, for the first time, the elderly and people with disabilities could cast their votes from home, and the postal voting option was available for a specific category of voters. Assistive technologies like braille-enabled voter cards and app-based requests for assistance, including wheelchairs and ramps, were also made possible.

LET'S EXPLORE

- → Discuss in groups — What role do such measures play in a democracy? Do you know of anyone who benefited from these improved accessibility measures? How might they increase voter participation in your neighbourhood? How can technology assist?
- → If you have access to the internet, visit the ECI website (https://www.eci.gov.in/persons-with-disabilities). Read and identify the various interventions that the ECI has taken to facilitate voting by people with disabilities.

Fig. 5.5.

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Fig. 5.6. India's electoral system endeavours to enable every citizen to exercise their franchise. This includes measures such as organising a polling station for a single woman voter, postal voting and providing wheelchair assistance.

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LET'S EXPLORE

About 34 per cent of eligible voters did not exercise their right to vote in the 2024 elections. Why do you think this is so? What are some challenges people face in exercising their rights? Design and conduct a short survey among adults in your family and neighbourhood to answer these questions. Analyse the data and write a report with suggestions on how it may be possible to ensure everyone votes.

DON'T MISS OUT

The Uttaramerur inscriptions from the 10th century describe a transparent process for the selection of representatives. Eligible candidates' names were written on fragments of palm leaves and placed in a pot, which was then sealed. On the selection day, it was opened publicly and a young boy drew the palm leaves randomly one by one; a respected individual, after showing his empty hands to the public, would read out each name of the selected candidates.

Election for class representative — Grade 8, Suryodaya School

Fig. 5.7.

It was time for the annual election of the Class Representative (Class Rep). The Class Rep would represent the class in meetings with teachers, organise events, and act as a bridge between the students and school authorities. Three students — Ahmed, Gurmat, and Ravi — decided to contest for the position. The class teacher, Ms. Usha, was appointed as the Election Officer to ensure the election process was fair, transparent, and followed all the necessary rules.

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Here's a brief introduction of each of the candidates:

Ahmed promised to improve the cleanliness of the classrooms and the playground.

Gurmat was interested in helping all her classmates learn better. She proposed creating a system of peer coaching and mutual support.

Ravi wanted to make more space in their class timetable for the arts curriculum — music, theatre, and visual art — in line with the new curriculum.

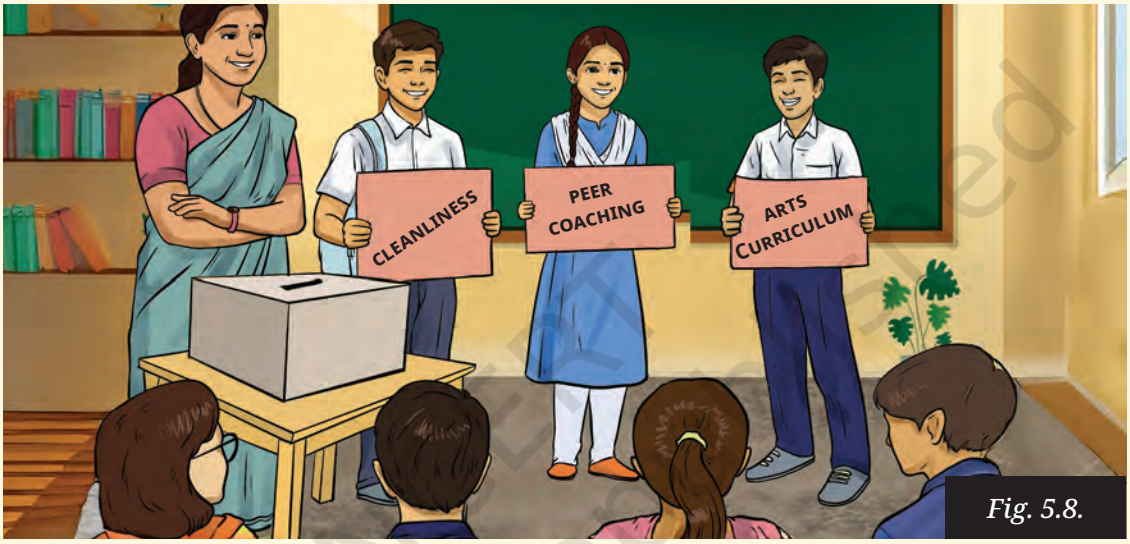

Fig. 5.8.

Campaigning:

Ahmed put up posters, Gurmat used the noticeboard and spoke to classmates, while Ravi held a lunchtime music performance to promote his idea. As the Election Officer, Ms. Usha had to organise the elections and ensure it was conducted fairly. She explained the rules to the class, ensuring everyone understood how the secret ballot voting process would work; no one would know who voted for whom, ensuring the process was private and fair. She set up the voting booths in the corner of the classroom.

Voting day:

On election day, each student was given a ballot paper with the names of the three candidates. The students were asked to mark an 'X' next to the name of the candidate they wished to vote for. Ms. Usha also ensured that there was a ballot paper in braille for Neha. After all the students voted, Ms. Usha collected the ballots in a box and sealed it until the counting session.

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The results:

After all the 33 votes were cast, Ms. Usha called Ms Sheeba from the next class to witness the counting process. One of the ballot papers was not marked, so it was declared invalid. The results were announced: Ahmed received 8 votes, Gurmat 12 and Ravi 10. Gurmat, with the most votes, was declared the new Class Representative. She thanked her classmates and promised to fulfil her commitments. Ahmed and Ravi congratulated her and offered to support her.

LET'S EXPLORE

- → What are the most important aspects of the election process in this caselet?
- → Why was it important to have a secret ballot?
- → What considerations might the students have had while exercising their choice?
- → Do you think the students have any responsibility after Gurmat was elected as the class rep? If yes, what are they?
- → What was the role that Ms. Usha played? Why was it important?
- → Why was it important for Ms. Usha to organise a braille ballot paper for Neha?
- → What would happen if many students in the class chose not to mark a preference?

DON'T MISS OUT

Imagine if a student did not want to vote for any of the candidates — Ahmed, Gurmat, or Ravi. What option would they have? Some countries, including India, offer an additional option, **NOTA** — **N**one **O**f **T**he **A**bove**.** This option allows voters to reject all candidates if they are not satisfied with any of them. It doesn't change the result but sends a message — voters want better choices. NOTA is a quiet but powerful tool in a democracy.

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The Role of the Election Commission of India (ECI)

We have seen the size and diversity that needs to be kept in mind in the organisation of the election process in India. In this section, we will look at the different types of elections that the ECI organises and oversees.

LET'S REMEMBER

India is a parliamentary democracy where, at the national level, citizens choose representatives for the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Parliament). They focus on issues affecting the entire country. In addition, voters elect representatives from their constituencies to the legislative assemblies in the state and union territories where they are registered. These members focus primarily on regional issues.

These are just two of the elections that the ECI manages; we will see more in the later sections. However, before we get a glimpse of the election process, let us get introduced to the Election Commission of India, the institution that oversees it.

LET'S REMEMBER

In Grade 6, you read about direct elections to gram panchayats and urban local bodies. The State Election Commissions manage these.

Election Commission of India — A brief introduction

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an independent constitutional body responsible for conducting free and fair elections. It was established in 1950 and conducts elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President. The first general elections in independent India were held in 1951-1952.

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The ECI performs crucial tasks like:

Fig. 5.9. Tasks performed by the Election Commission of India

Fig. 5.10. Office of the the Election Commission of India in Delhi

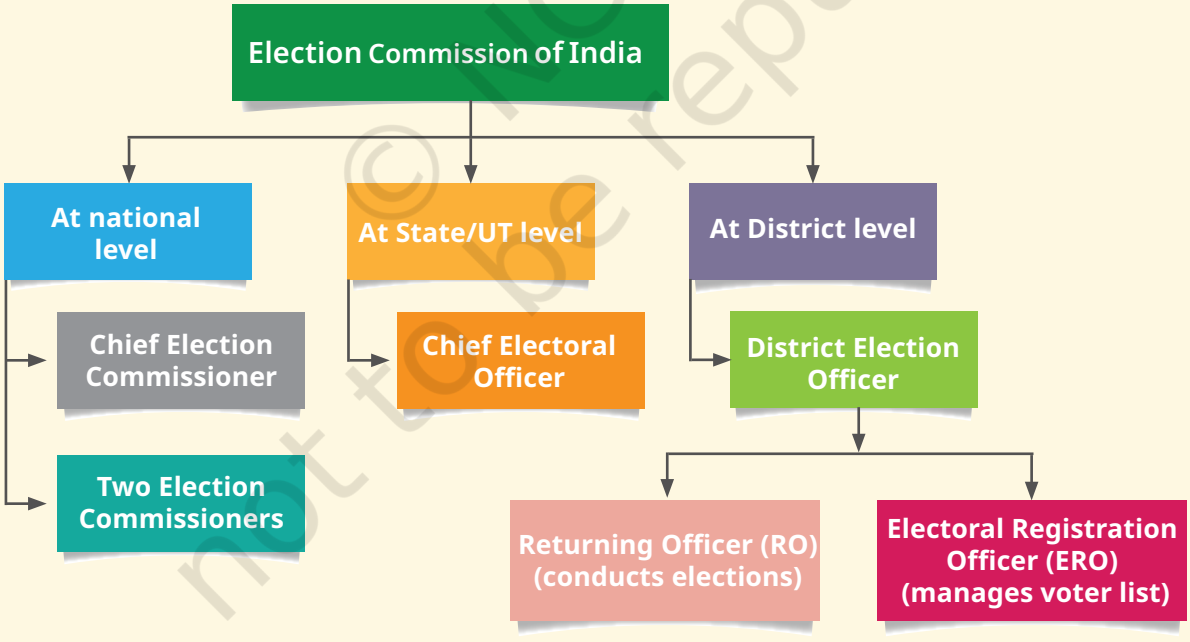

Fig. 5.11. Structure of the Election Commission of India

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Managing the electoral process

Managing elections in India is a mammoth task. The ECI has been upgrading its capacities to keep pace with the needs of modern India in conducting free and fair elections. The electoral system is massive and needs to work efficiently. We take the example of the Lok Sabha elections to illustrate this. Note that the elections to the state assemblies follow a similar process. All elections take place at different times but with some periodicity; so every year, several polls are conducted in various parts of the country based on when they are due.

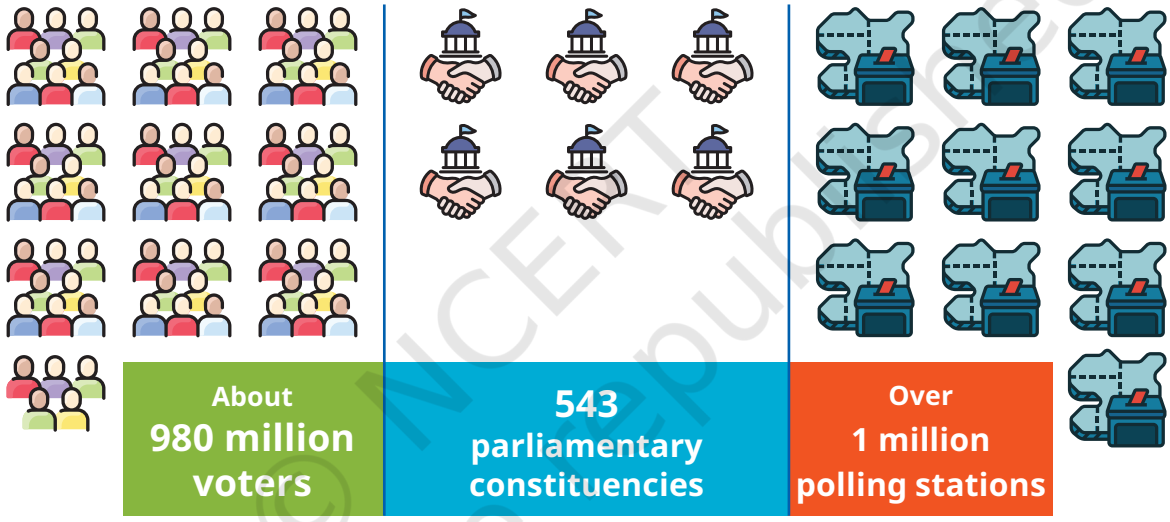

Fig. 5.12. A few numbers showing the scale of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

As you can see, the numbers are very large. Many people are deployed to assist the whole process, including teachers.

LET'S EXPLORE

Identify teachers in your school or vicinity who may have performed election duty. Invite them to your class to share their experiences.

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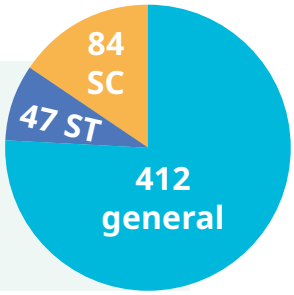
DON'T MISS OUT

84 of the Lok Sabha constituencies are reserved for persons from the scheduled castes, while 47 are reserved for scheduled tribes.



Process of voting for the Lok Sabha and State assemblies

1st polling officer: Checks name on voter list and ID proof.

2nd polling officer: Inks finger, gives chit and takes your signature.

3rd polling officer: Takes chit and checks your finger. NOTA (None Of The Above) option is also available.

4th Press button to vote on the electronic voting machine (EVM); you hear a beep sound. **Also check the** printed slip in VVPAT.

Fig. 5.13.

Fig. 5.14. Managing the elections — extensive use of technology

Fig. 5.15. Shyam Saran Negi, a school teacher in Himachal Pradesh, was the first voter in India's general elections of 1951. Here, in 2017, he cast his vote at the age of 100.

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LET'S EXPLORE

Fig. 5.16. Electronic voting machines

→ India's electronic voting machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) systems have been used in countries like Namibia and Bhutan with support from the ECI. Other countries have also studied this technology and have received training from India to adopt it in their countries.

→ VVPAT is a system that produces a physical paper record, allowing voters to verify that their electronic votes were cast correctly. This paper trail provides a backup for verification and recounting purposes in case of disputes or failures of the electronic system.

Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

The code is followed to ensure free and fair elections, listing the dos and don'ts for leaders, political parties, and candidates that must be adhered to.

A few elements of the code:

i. There are rules that the party in government must follow; this ensures that the resources available to the government are not used for the purpose of the elections. For example, no new schemes and projects are to be announced that may influence voters.

ii. All candidates are expected to exercise discretion and restraint to ensure that the elections take place peacefully.

iii. Influencing voters through gifts in return for votes is punishable.

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LET'S EXPLORE

→ Here are a few types of complaints that the ECI handles.

Fig. 5.17. A candidate distributed sarees and household appliances to women voters.

Fig. 5.18. Abusive language used by the candidate of one party against the candidate from an opposing party.

Fig. 5.19. Officials of the government campaigning for the ruling party.

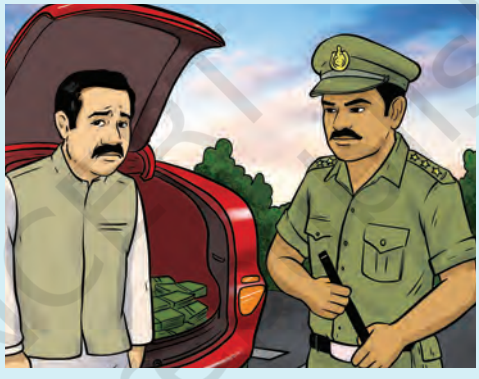

Fig. 5.20. Bundles of ₹500/- notes found in the car of a candidate during inspections.

→ Why do you think these might be violations of the code of conduct?

DON'T MISS OUT

The Model Code of Conduct was adopted in Kerala in 1960, voluntarily approved by representatives of the major political parties of the time. The ECI circulated it to political parties during the 1962 general elections, and from 1991, the ECI became proactive in ensuring the observance of the MCC.

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DON'T MISS OUT

T.N. Seshan became the Chief Election Commissioner in 1990. He brought in reforms to ensure free and fair elections, among them: campaigning to follow precise rules, voter IDs to eliminate proxy voting, and strict vigilance on spending by candidates. T.N. Seshan worked hard to protect the rights of voters and is often remembered as the officer who made Indian elections fairer, transparent and fearless!

Fig. 5.21. T.N. Seshan

LET'S EXPLORE

When is the next election in the region where you are located? Is it to the state, urban local body or panchayat?

Understanding Elections in India — A Very Brief Overview

Election to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies

Elections in India are often referred to as the 'Festival of Democracy' — a time when citizens exercise their right to choose representatives freely, fairly, and responsibly.

We know that India follows a parliamentary system of government where citizens participate in various levels of elections — Lok Sabha (national level), state legislative assemblies (state level) and local bodies (city and village level). The country is divided into 543 constituencies for the Lok Sabha elections. The elected candidates to the Lok Sabha are known as **Members of Parliament** (MPs), whereas candidates elected to state assemblies are known as **Members of Legislative Assembly** (MLAs). India uses the 'First-Past-the-Post' electoral system, wherein the candidate receiving the most votes in a

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constituency wins. This means that a candidate can win without securing even 50 per cent of the total votes (like Gurmat won despite getting only 12 out of the 33 votes).

DON'T MISS OUT

The legislative assembly is called by several names in regional languages, for example, Vidhan Sabha and Niyama Sabha. What is it called in your state?

After the voting process is completed, the process of government formation begins. The political party or **coalition** winning a majority of the seats in the Lok Sabha forms the national government. The leader of this majority typically becomes the prime minister. Similarly, at the state level, the leader of the majority party becomes the chief minister.

Coalition: A group of two or more parties working together

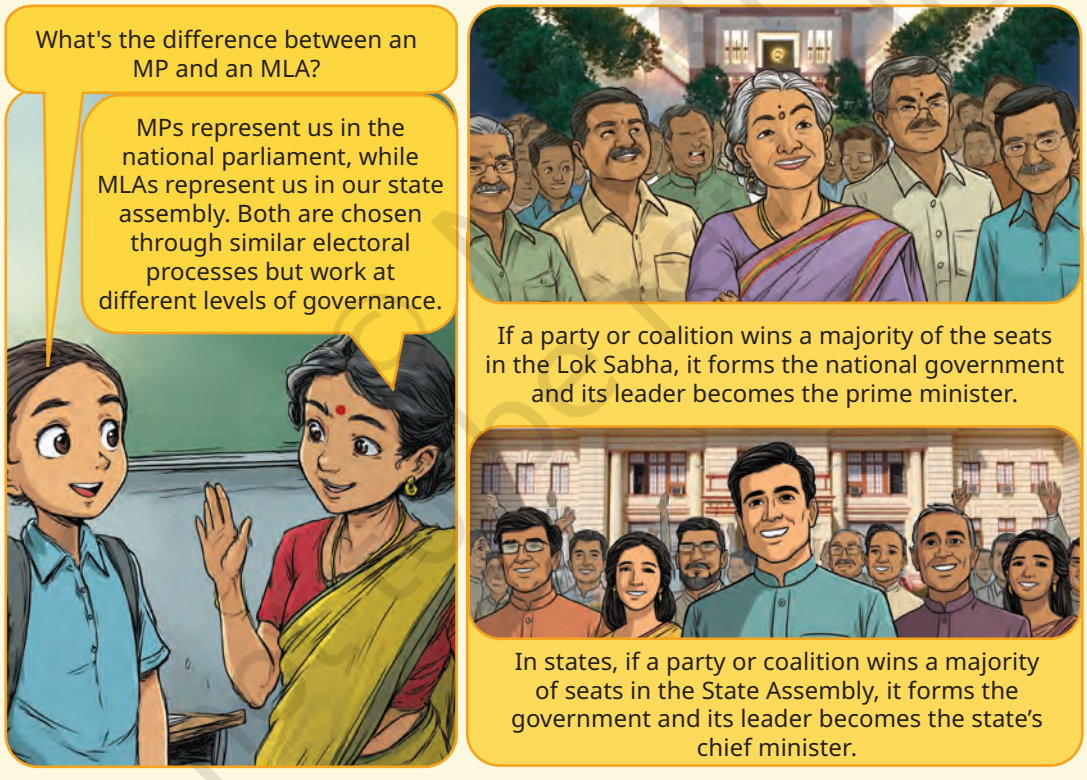

Fig. 5.22

As we saw in Fig. 5.11, the State Election Commission is a part of the election apparatus. It plays an important role not only in general and state elections but also in conducting elections to

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local bodies at the grassroots level. It works in consultation with the ECI in these matters, and universal adult franchise, and all other Constitutional provisions applicable in the case of direct elections by the people are pertinent here too.

LET'S EXPLORE

- → Who are the MP and MLA / MLAs of the constituency you are located in? (A Lok Sabha constituency may have two or more assembly constituencies.)
- → Which party does each of them belong to?
- → What are the concerns of the MP and MLA, respectively?

Election to the Rajya Sabha

The candidates elected to the Rajya Sabha are also known as Members of Parliament (MPs), but they are chosen through **indirect elections**.

Let us revisit the example of Suryodaya School. Imagine that the school is setting up a special council at the school level. If the members of this council are elected by the class representatives, it would be an indirect election.

Dissolution: Expiry or termination due to the end of its term or other Constitutional reason

Of the 245 members of the Rajya Sabha, 233 are elected by the elected members of the state legislative assemblies (MLAs), while the President of India nominates 12. Each state is allotted a different number of Rajya Sabha seats based on population. For example, more populous states like Uttar Pradesh have more seats than less populous states like Arunachal Pradesh.

The Rajya Sabha is also called the Permanent House — it is never **dissolved**. A member of the Rajya Sabha has a six-year term. One-third of its members retire every two years, and new members are elected.

There is a difference, however, in the voting process. It uses what is called a '**single transferable vote system**'. This is a special way of ensuring that smaller states also get fair representation in the Rajya Sabha. You will learn more about the exact mechanism of how this works in higher classes.

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Rajya Sabha: The Council of States

MLAs

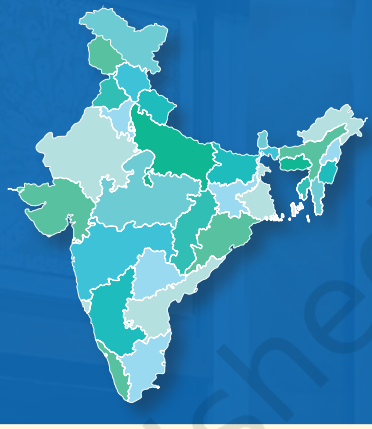
Vote in indirect elections

Elect 233 Rajya Sabha members

President of India

Nominates 12 members

Rajya Sabha members are elected by MLAs through indirect elections, while the President nominates 12 distinguished individuals.



Seat allocation is based on state populations; more populous states like Uttar Pradesh have more seats.

Rajya Sabha is a permanent body; one-third of its members retire every two years, ensuring continuity.

MLAs vote using a single transferable vote system, ranking candidates by preference.

Fig. 5.23

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Election of the President of India

The **President of India** is not directly elected by the common people. Instead, an electoral college is formed to carry out the election. This Electoral College consists of:

- Members of Parliament (MPs) from both the houses of the Parliament — Lok Sabha (Lower House) and the Rajya Sabha (Upper House)
- Members of the Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) from each of India's states and the union territories of Delhi and Puducherry

The single transferable vote system is followed in this election. Since the president represents the whole country, this method ensures the support of both the central and state governments. The rules for voting and counting are very elaborate; the more populous states have a greater say. (We need not go into the details at this stage.)

Bicameral legislatures: A bicameral legislature is a system where the legislative body is divided into two separate chambers or houses.

The following group of people is **not involved** in electing the President of India:

- Nominated members of Rajya Sabha (12)
- Nominated members of State Legislative Assemblies
- Members of Legislative Councils (both elected and nominated) in **bicameral legislatures**
- Nominated members of union territories of Delhi and Puducherry

THINK ABOUT IT

Why do you think the above group of people is not involved in electing the President of India? Why are the common people not involved in the election of the president?

It is because this ensures that only directly elected representatives vote to elect the President. This maintains democratic legitimacy, as the President is meant to represent the will of the people, indirectly but meaningfully.

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Election of the Vice President of India

The Vice President of India is elected by an electoral college consisting of the elected and nominated members of both Houses of Parliament; again, the system of single transferable vote is used.

The vice president is the chairperson of the Rajya Sabha. If there are situations when the president is not able to discharge their function, the vice president steps in to play the role.

Challenges and The Road Ahead

India's electoral system is celebrated as the world's largest democratic exercise. However, like all systems, it faces its share of challenges. Issues such as the growing influence of money in elections, a significant proportion of candidates with criminal records, and voter apathy, (particularly in urban areas), raise important questions about the health and future of our democracy.

The way forward lies in empowering voters with the information they need to make thoughtful and responsible choices. Media, education, and awareness campaigns must work together to help people, especially the youth, understand the importance of voting wisely. An aware and vigilant voter is the strongest safeguard of a democratic system. It starts with asking the right questions — and ends with casting a responsible vote.

Before we move on...

- Universal adult franchise is the cornerstone of Indian democracy.
- The right to vote is a responsibility, too. It needs to be taken seriously by every voter. Voter awareness is an important aspect of the right to vote.
- It is important to facilitate the participation of all eligible voters.
- The Election Commission of India is the Constitutional body that conducts elections in the country.

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- The ECI oversees all the elections in the country, including those of the president and vice president.
- Indian democracy faces challenges that call for the voters' vigilance and awareness.

Questions and activities

1. Why is universal adult franchise important for a healthy democracy?
2. What is the meaning of 'secret ballot'? Why is this important in a democracy?
3. Give examples of direct and indirect elections.
4. How is the election of members to the Lok Sabha different from that to the Rajya Sabha?
5. What, in your view, are the advantages of the EVM over paper ballots?
6. Voter turnout has been declining in some urban areas of India. What could be the reasons for this trend, and what steps can be taken to encourage more people to vote?
7. Why do you think a proportion of seats in the Lok Sabha is reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes? Write a short note.
8. Social media is changing the way we experience elections — from catchy campaign reels and live speeches to political debates on Instagram and Twitter. But is this strengthening democracy or confusing it? Discuss in pairs: What are the benefits, what are the challenges, and what might the future of elections be in a digital age?
9. Visit the website *https://www.indiavotes.com*, and choose a parliamentary constituency election from any year and explore its results. Do the same for an assembly election in your state.

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CHAPTER 6

The Parliamentary System: Legislature and Executive

The Constitution is not a mere lawyer's document; it is a vehicle of life, and its spirit is always the spirit of the age.

– Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar
November 1949, Constituent Assembly Debates

Fig. 6.1. Features of the new Parliament building

The Big Questions

1. *What is India's parliamentary system, and how is it structured?*
2. *What are the key functions of the Parliament?*
3. *What are the roles of the legislature and the executive in India's Parliamentary democracy?*
4. *How are the legislature and the executive organised at the union and state levels?*

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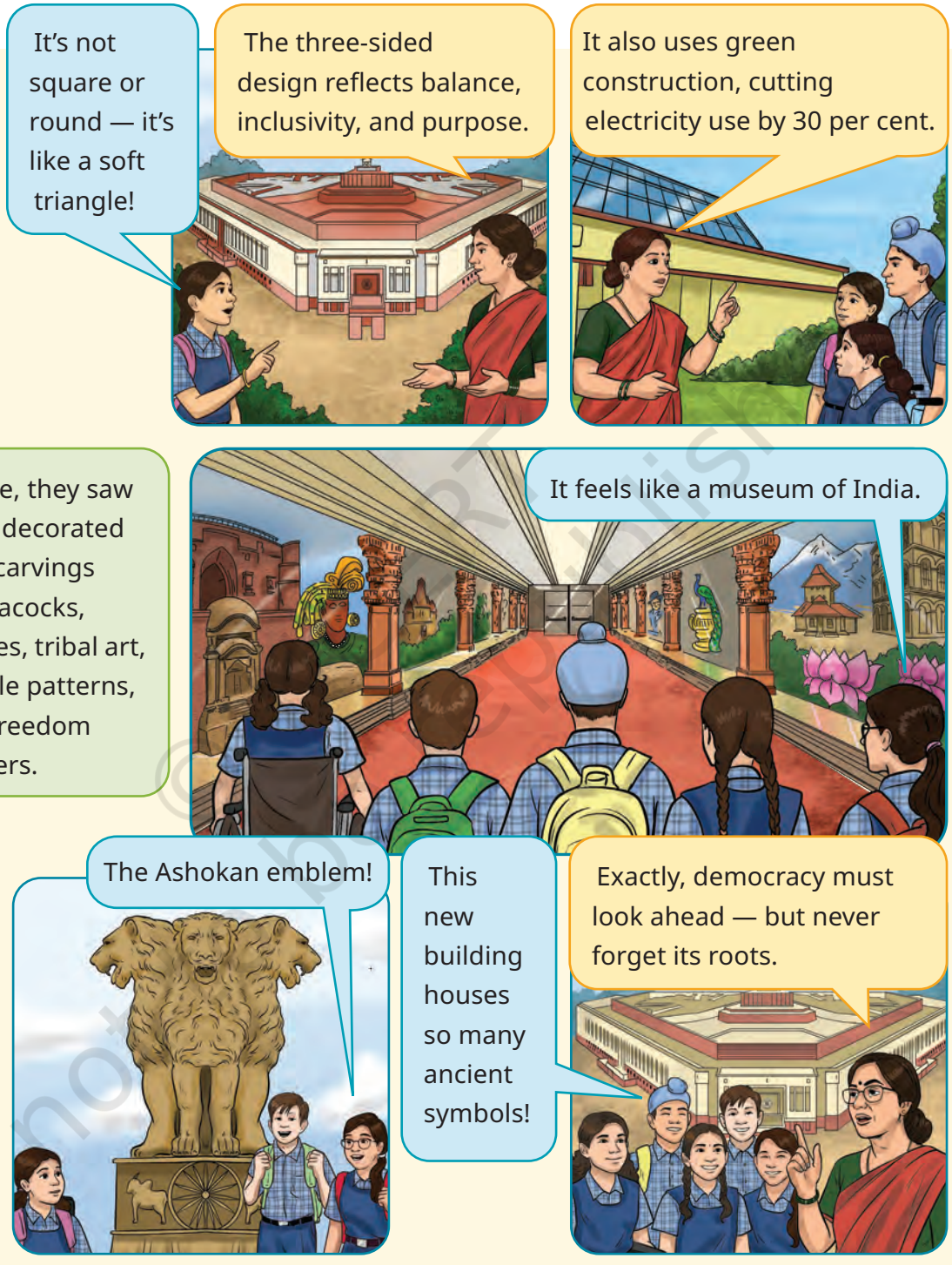
The Grade 8 students from Nalanda Vidyalaya were on a school trip to Delhi. Usha, Sukhwinder, Anjali, John, and Farida were especially excited to visit the new Parliament building.



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Introduction

India's independence was achieved through great sacrifices by many people of the country after years of struggle against colonial rule. The citizens of a free country could now make decisions about their own governance. The first important step in this new epoch in the life of our nation was the drafting of the Constitution of independent India. This comprehensive document laid foundational principles for the nation, including that of Universal Adult Franchise which guarantees all adult citizens of the country the right to vote irrespective of their social or economic background, gender, race, or religion.

The people of India directly elect their representatives who become members of the Lok Sabha. A majority group from among these elected representatives forms the government. The Parliament is the supreme legislative body of the government (it makes laws for the country). It comprises all elected representatives of the people and controls and guides the work of the government. The government can therefore be seen as functioning with the people's consent. There have been 17 Lok Sabhas since the first one in 1952. The 18th Lok Sabha was constituted in June 2024.

Fig. 6.2. Our old Parliament (now called Samvidhan Sadan) building was constructed in the 1920s. The Constituent Assembly met there for its deliberations, and it served as Parliament House for over seven decades.

Fig. 6.3. The Parliament Building (Sansad Bhavan) in New Delhi was constructed to accommodate the growing needs including capacity, technology, sustainability and safety.

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Composition of the Parliament of India

The Indian Parliament is composed of the President and two houses: the Lok Sabha (House of the People / Lower House) and the Rajya Sabha (Council of States / Upper House). This structure with two houses is called a 'bicameral' system ('bi' means two, 'cameral' means chamber / house).

Fig. 6.4. Lok Sabha Chambers in the new Parliament building

Fig. 6.5. A view of the Chamber of the Rajya Sabha taken from the Press Gallery

LET'S REMEMBER

The people of India choose their representatives for the Lok Sabha through a direct election (based on universal adult suffrage). The maximum number of members of this House envisaged by the Constitution is 550. The Members of Parliament (MPs) in the Rajya Sabha are elected indirectly by the electoral college that you read about in the previous chapter. Both, the number of Rajya Sabha seats allocated and the number of MPs represented in the Lok Sabha, are based on the population of each state.

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DON'T MISS OUT

We are aware that several aspects of the Indian Constitution were drawn from the constitutions of other countries. Britain's system inspired our system of Parliamentary democracy. However, there were also experiences that our freedom fighters and Constitution makers had — the practical experience gained through participation in British colonial governance structures, even if in a very limited way, that provided familiarity with Parliamentary procedures; the memory of the ancient republics (*mahājanapadas*); the village panchayats where elders made collective decisions, as we learnt in a previous chapter.

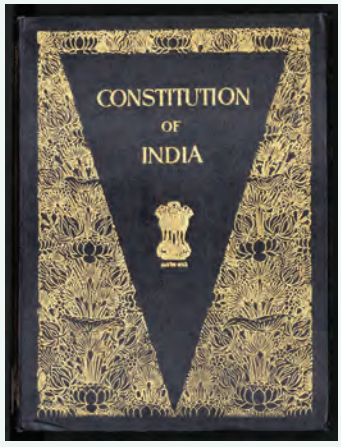

Fig. 6.6. Constitution of India

Extensive discussions took place during the making of the Constitution regarding whether India should have a bicameral system. It was felt that a single directly elected House would be inadequate to meet the challenges independent India would face. In the spirit of 'federalism', it was felt that a Council of States, the Rajya Sabha, was needed. The composition and process of election to the Rajya Sabha were also designed to be different. India practices federalism, which is a form of government where power is distributed between the centre, states, as well as local governments. This system helps to keep the balance between national unity and local interests.

Function

Each House of the Parliament has a presiding officer to ensure that debates and discussions are conducted in an orderly manner. In the Lok Sabha, the members elect a speaker, who conducts the sessions, allows members to speak, maintains discipline, and ensures that rules are followed. The Rajya Sabha is presided over by the Vice President of India, who acts as its chairperson.

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DON'T MISS OUT

Sceptre: A decorated rod carried by a king or queen at ceremonies as a symbol of their power

The Sengol, a gold-plated, silver **sceptre** was symbolically handed over to Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, on 14 August 1947 on the occasion of Indian Independence as a powerful symbol to mark the transfer of power. It is now placed near the Speaker's chair in the new Lok Sabha, and served as a symbol of righteous and just rule. Dating back to the Chola period, the Sengol was handed to new rulers as a reminder that power must be guided by dharma and righteousness. At its top sits Nandi, symbolising justice.

Fig. 6.7. The Sengol

To help make Parliamentary discussions accessible to all, translation services are provided in multiple Indian languages. Previously, simultaneous interpretation was available in 12 languages, namely, Hindi, English, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Tamil, Punjabi and Telugu. Recently, six more languages were added: Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Manipuri, Urdu, and Sanskrit. More languages are expected to be added in the future.

The 'executive' responsibility of the Parliament (i.e., ensuring that laws are implemented and enforced) is as important as its 'legislative' function (i.e., the making of laws). The Union Executive gives life to the legislative functions and power of the Parliament. The Union Executive consists of the following members:

- The President,
- The Vice President, and
- The Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister.

The Council of Ministers is chosen from among the MPs of both houses of Parliament. These ministers are collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.

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Let us now discuss the Legislative and Executive functions of the Parliament.

Legislative Functions of the Parliament

The Constitution lays down the key functions that the Parliament needs to fulfil. They can be broadly classified under the following heads:

1. Constitutional functions
2. Lawmaking
3. Executive accountability
4. Financial accountability

We explore them briefly in the sections below.

1) Constitutional function

LET'S REMEMBER

From your previous lessons on the theme of Democracy and Governance, name a few Constitutional functions of the Parliament. Did you list the election of President and Vice President? What about amendments to the Constitution? Indeed, these are vital constitutional functions of the Parliament. There are other important functions that we will explore in higher grades.

The Parliament is directly entrusted with upholding the core values of the Indian Constitution, including:

a. Enabling parliamentary democracy through universal adult suffrage,

b. Following the separation of powers between the legislature, executive, and judiciary,

c. Ensuring federalism, and

d. Upholding Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy by framing laws and policies.

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Bill: A bill is a draft of a proposed law that needs to be approved by the parliament before it can be enacted into law.

2) Lawmaking

Among the primary responsibilities of the legislature is to make laws. The Constitution has laid out an elaborate and rigorous process for lawmaking. A law is generally brought into force through an instrument called an **act**. A **bill**, which is a draft of a proposed law, is introduced in Parliament and goes through a long and effortful journey before it becomes an act. Given below is the journey of how a bill becomes an act, and ultimately a law, in the case of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE).

"Most people call me RTE. I came into existence in August 2009, though the idea began almost a century before.

My roots lie in the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution. Though the Constitution makers wanted me implemented within a decade after Independence, this didn't happen, leaving countless children without access to education.

In the early 1990s, someone argued in court that I was inherently part of the Fundamental Rights in the Constitution, namely, the Right to Life — as education is important to lead a meaningful life. Parliamentary action began some years later with the introduction of the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, which mandated — as Article 21A of the Constitution — that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years.

Six years later, I was tabled as a bill in the Rajya Sabha. A committee studied me thoroughly and suggested modifications.

The major debate concerned funding — new schools, infrastructure, and teachers for millions of children would be costly. By 2008, the MPs determined it was time.

After the 2009 elections, the new government pursued the matter, and in August 2009, I was passed in the Lok Sabha and received the President's assent, becoming an Act.

Today, I've enabled the creation of legal pathways for children to attend school, facilitated new school construction, and ensured free books and uniforms for children."

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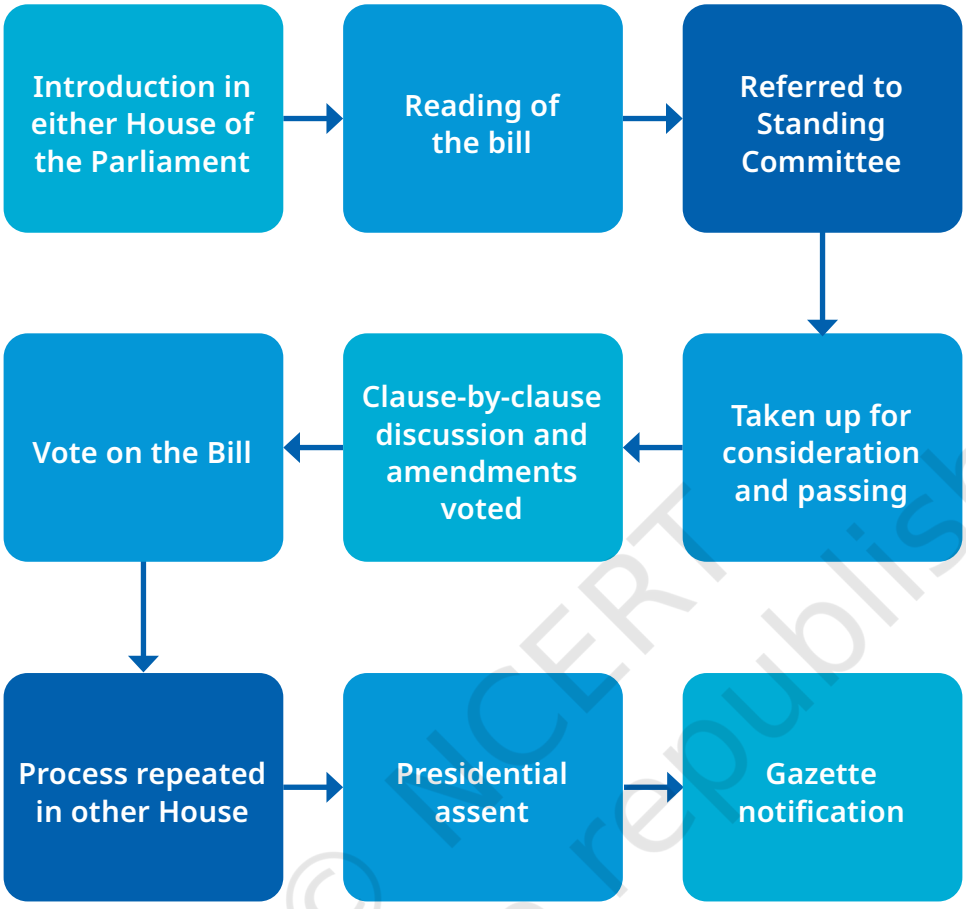
From bill to act – the process of lawmaking in the Parliament



Note: All bills may not be referred to Committees.

Fig. 6.8. Process of lawmaking – a simplified diagram to illustrate key steps.

Reading: The origins are in the British Parliament. Many MPs were illiterate, so a clerk would read out the contents of the bill for the MPs to discuss. Today MPs read the bill before the discussions take place.

Clause: These are parts of a bill that explain the specific details of the bill; eg. RTE defines the age group to which it applies (6 to 14 years).

Gazette: This is an official government publication that announces legal documents and official information.

Standing Committee: It is a permanent committee consisting of MPs (the MPs may change, but the committee as a structure remains) that scrutinises government activities, makes recommendations and asks questions on actions taken by the government.

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LET'S EXPLORE

Draw a small chart to show the process of how RTE became an act. What do you think the process would be if RTE had been tabled in the Lok Sabha?

DON'T MISS OUT

Some types of bills have to be tabled only in the Lok Sabha. One example is a 'Money Bill' that is concerned with financial matters (including taxation, government borrowing, etc.). It is essentially a draft law that can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha; however, the introduction of the bill requires the prior recommendation of the President.

3) Executive accountability

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are part of the Union Executive. They are:

- primarily responsible for implementing and enforcing laws and overseeing the effective running of the government;
- take decisions regarding the day-to-day functioning of the government based on the principles laid out in the Constitution and its laws;
- answerable to the Lok Sabha, through mechanisms like the Question Hour which require ministers to justify their actions and decisions. The Question Hour in the Lok Sabha is a select period (typically the first hour of a Parliamentary session) where MPs can ask the ministers questions about government policies and activities. It is a process of the Parliament that holds the Executive 'accountable' (i.e., it must justify all actions and decisions). Special committees also hold meetings where ministries have to explain and answer questions about their policies. These committees may include MPs from different political parties.

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The Parliament isn't always formal and serious. Sometimes, the atmosphere is set through poetry and humour!

Example 1: Verse in the Parliament

While presenting the Union Budget for the year 2025-26 on the 1st of February, 2025, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman recited the following verse from *Tirukkural* (an ancient Indian treatise in Tamil on ethics and morality):

Vaanokki vaalum ulakellaam
Mannavan koalnokki vaalung kudi.

It means:

Just as living beings live expecting rains,
Citizens live expecting good governance.

On hearing this, there was an enthusiastic thumping of desks from the Treasury Benches.

*

Example 2: Humour in the Parliament

In 2011, during a spirited debate in the Lok Sabha, Parliamentarian Sushma Swaraj quoted a poetic verse to criticise the government:

"Tu idhar udhar ki na baat kar, yeh bata ki kafila kyun luta, humein rahjano se gila nahi, teri rahbari ka sawal hai."

Don't change the topic, just say why the caravan was looted. We have no complaint with the robbers, but this is a question on your leadership.

In response, the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh calmly replied with another poetic line:

"Maana ki teri deed ke qabil nahin hoon main, tu mera shauq dekh mera intezar dekh."

I admit that I am not worthy of your sight; you should look at my zeal and my perseverance.

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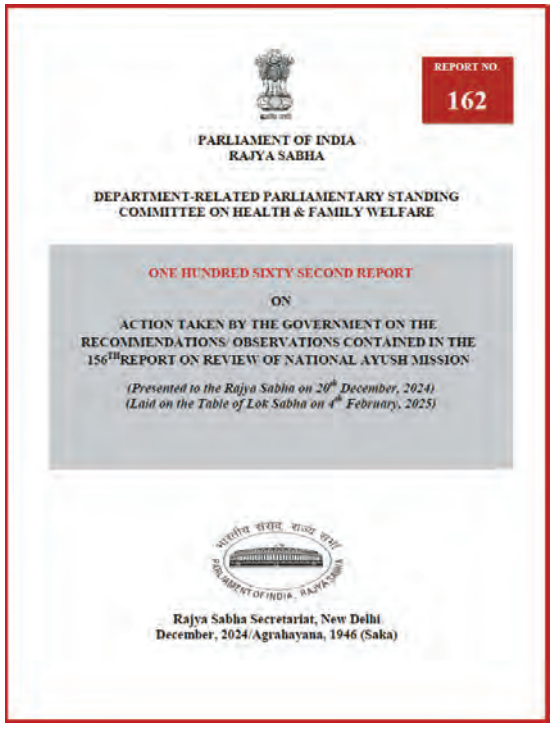

REPORT NO.
162

PARLIAMENT OF INDIA
RAJYA SABHA

DEPARTMENT-RELATED PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE

ONE HUNDRED SIXTY SECOND REPORT

ON

ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS/ OBSERVATIONS CONTAINED IN THE 156TH REPORT ON REVIEW OF NATIONAL AYUSH MISSION

(Presented to the Rajya Sabha on 20th December, 2024)
(Laid on the Table of Lok Sabha on 4th February, 2025)

Rajya Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi
December, 2024/Agrahayana, 1946 (Saka)

Fig. 6.9. Extract from a report of the Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare

1.2 Co-location of Ayush facilities at Primary Health Centers (PHCs), Community Health Centers (CHCs) and District Hospitals (DHs)

Recommendation:

1.2.1 The Committee, at this juncture, notices that in some states and UTs, a separate Department of Ayush has not been opened. The Committee, to boost the Ayush system and for better coordination in Ayush Healthcare, recommends the Ministry of Ayush to impress upon and persuade the States and UTs with no separate department of Ayush to create such a department for speedy development and implementation of Ayush sector and schemes respectively.

(Para 2.13 of the Report)

Action Taken:

1.2.2 Public Health is being a state subject, creation of separate Department of Ayush in the States/UTs comes under purview of respective State/UT Governments. However. Ministry of Ayush has requested State/UT Governments in different meetings to create separate Directorates, deployment of manpower in SPMU & DPMU in the States/UTs for speedy development and implementation of NAM scheme As on date, separate Ayush Directorate is available in 24 States/UTs. (SPMU=state project management unit; DPMU=district project management unit)

(Para 2.23 of the Report)

LET'S EXPLORE

Given here is an extract from the report of meetings between the Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare and the officers from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Observe the screenshots above and discuss the following in small groups — Who is reporting to whom? What is the subject that has been reviewed? Identify the Committee's recommendation. What is the government's reply?

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4) Financial accountability

The Parliament approves and monitors government expenditure through the annual budget, and examining the distribution of funds to different ministries.

LET'S EXPLORE

Why do you think that Parliament keeps an eye on government expenditure? (*Hint: Whose money does the government spend?)*

The government is expected to provide the necessary information to Parliament in a timely and accurate manner.

Executive Functions of Parliament

We have uncovered a few points on the role of the executive in the previous sections. We look at this a little more closely now.

DON'T MISS OUT

Part V of the Indian Constitution begins with Chapter I — The Executive. It looks at the roles and responsibilities of the President, Vice President, and Council of Ministers, among others. It is in Chapter II that the role and functions of Parliament are listed. Why might this be so?

1) The President

The President is the Head of State and the nominal head of the Executive. The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are responsible for running the government. The President appoints the Prime Minister and other ministers, summons the Parliament, and gives assent to bills, among other functions. The Council of Ministers aids and advises the President. However, in specific circumstances, the President can exercise discretionary powers, particularly during political crises, like when no party holds a clear majority in a Lok Sabha election.

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2) The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers

The Prime Minister is the de facto executive authority in India's Parliamentary system. The President appoints the leader of the majority party or coalition in the Lok Sabha as the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister serves with the support of the majority of the MPs in the Lok Sabha.

The Prime Minister's key functions include:

- Leading the Council of Ministers
- Coordinating the work of different ministries
- Advising the President
- Shaping national policies

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers take decisions and run the government. They are collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. Most of the bills that come to the Parliament for discussion are initiated by the government. A permanent group of officials — called 'civil servants' — help in implementing laws and policies. These officers, often called administrators or bureaucrats, work under the direction of ministers and ensure that government departments function smoothly.

LET'S EXPLORE

If the Executive is part of the Legislature, how do we say that there is separation of power? *(Hint: revisit the section on legislature above)*

DON'T MISS OUT

In 1956, Railway Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri resigned after a train accident. Although he was not blamed for the accident, he believed that a minister must take moral responsibility for anything that happens in their ministry. He offered his resignation to the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru; Nehru declined at first, but Shastri insisted. Finally, his resignation was accepted.

Fig. 6.10. Lal Bahadur Shastri (Minister for Railways and later Prime Minister of India)

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Differences Between the Legislature and the Executive

It is important to understand some key differences between the Legislature and the Executive. The following table briefly summarises the distinctions.

Aspect	Legislature	Executive
Composition	The Parliament of India is the supreme legislative body of the country, composed of the President, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.	The Executive is composed of the President, the Vice-President, and the Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister.
Main Role	Making laws and overseeing the work of the Executive	Enforcing the laws made by the Legislature
Functions	Can introduce some bills in the Parliament	Most of the bills are introduced by the Executive in the Parliament
	Keeps a check on the activities of the Executive by asking questions and seeking explanations	Provides information and explanations to the Legislature on its decisions and actions. Aids and advises the President on important matters, including calling sessions of Parliament.
	Sanctions all government-related expenses	Prepares and implements the budget approved by Parliament.
	Consults different Parliamentary committees	Can function independently in day-to-day matters and may consult committees when required.

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The Judiciary — Role of Checks and Balances

The Judiciary is the branch of government that is responsible for interpreting and applying the laws of the land, including in specific cases of disputes. The Judiciary functions through a system of courts and plays a pivotal role in maintaining the democratic nature of society and governance. The Judiciary acts as the custodian of the Constitution, ensuring that all branches of the government operate within the principles and parameters enshrined in the Constitution. It keeps a check on the effective functioning of society and institutions of the government by interpreting laws, resolving disputes, and safeguarding fundamental rights.

The Constitution not only describes how the Legislature and Executive are given power to govern the country, but it also lists the specific responsibilities of these organs. To ensure that the powers of the Legislature are used properly and responsibilities are followed, the Judiciary is given the unique and critical responsibility of checking that the laws passed by Parliament have not violated the Constitutional framework. Similarly, if a violation of the Constitution occurs when the laws are implemented by the Executive, the Judiciary again has the power to step in. Just as the Parliament functions through its Legislature and the Executive arms, the Judiciary functions through its Courts.

In this chapter, we have explored how the organs within the Parliament balance making of the law and executing it, and how the Judiciary checks these actions. These are all examples of the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances among the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary, ensuring that no one organ becomes too powerful.

LET'S EXPLORE

→ What might happen if one of the organs — Legislature, Executive, Judiciary — had all the power? How could it affect the rights of people? Discuss with your classmates

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how each organ checks the others. For example, how does the Legislature question the actions of the Executive? How does the Judiciary make sure that laws and government actions respect the Constitution? Do you think there might be ways in which the actions of the Judiciary itself are reviewed?

→ Can you find examples where the Judiciary has asked lawmakers to review a law? Can you find any instances when the implementation of a law has been questioned by the Judiciary?

We will learn more about the Judiciary in a later chapter.

Legislative and Executive Functions at the State Level

As discussed, the Union Government has a Parliament with legislative and executive functions. Similarly, each state has its own legislature and executive, called its 'State Assembly'. Just as the Parliament has Members of Parliament (MPs) who make laws, there are Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) who formulate laws on subjects that are on the 'State List' and on the 'Concurrent List'.

Union List, State List, and Concurrent List

The Constitution has lists that help to clarify the areas on which the Union and State governments can exclusively legislate, called the Union List and the State List, respectively. There is also a Concurrent List that has subjects on which both the Union and State governments can legislate. However, in the case that the Union government legislates on a subject in the Concurrent List, the state government is bound to follow it. In the case of RTE, for example, the Act is applicable all over India even though education is in the Concurrent List.

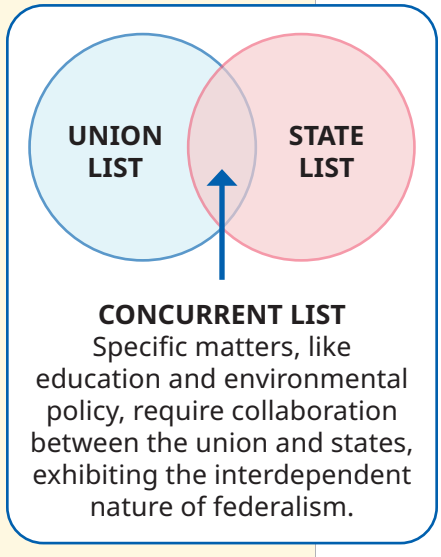

Fig. 6.11

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Parallel Structure of Union and State Governments in India

The structure at the state-level imitates the one at the union-level. You can see this structure across both levels in the table:

Feature	Union Government	State Government
Constitutional Head	The President of India elected by an electoral college	Governor of the State appointed by the President
Term of Office (Head)	5 years	5 years
Executive Head	The nominal head is the President, but the Prime Minister is the *de facto* executive authority at the centre	The nominal head is the Governor, but the Chief Minister is the *de facto* executive authority of the state
Selection of Executive	Leader of majority party/ coalition in Lok Sabha	Leader of majority party/ coalition in Vidhan Sabha
Council of Ministers	Selected by Prime Minister	Selected by Chief Minister
Responsibility	Collectively responsible to Lok Sabha	Collectively responsible to Vidhan Sabha
Legislature Structure	Bicameral - Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha	Can be unicameral (Vidhan Sabha only) or bicameral (Vidhan Sabha and Vidhan Parishad)
Lower House	Lok Sabha (House of the People)	Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly)
Upper House	Rajya Sabha (Council of States)	Vidhan Parishad (Legislative Council) - in some states only
Term of Lower House	5 years	5 years
Presiding Officer (Lower House)	Speaker	Speaker
Legislative Powers	Makes laws on subjects in Union List and Concurrent List	Makes laws on subjects in State List and Concurrent List
Financial Powers	Money bills originate only in Lok Sabha	Money bills originate only in Vidhan Sabha

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Structure of State Legislatures

Unlike the Centre, the State legislatures can be 'unicameral' (having only one house) or 'bicameral' (having two houses). The legislative assembly is called the *Vidhan Sabha*, and the legislative council (the upper house) is called the *Vidhan Parishad*. The states having a bicameral system are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh, while the remaining states have a unicameral system.

Fig. 6.12. Vidhana Soudha houses the legislature in Karnataka. This building was envisioned by Kengal Hanumanthaiah, who was a freedom fighter and a member of the Constituent Assembly, Chief Minister of Karnataka, and later a Member of Parliament.

LET'S EXPLORE

What type of legislature does your state have?

Challenges to the Effective Functioning of the Legislatures

As discussed, the Indian legislature (including the Parliament at the Centre and the State Assemblies) has the critical and vital role of enacting laws, overseeing administrative processes, and approving the budget. It also provides a platform for discussing national policies, development plans, international relations, and addressing public grievances. However, the legislature also faces several challenges in its effective functioning.

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Productivity: In the Parliamentary context, productivity is measured by the number of hours either the Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha actually functioned against the time it was scheduled to.

Some of these can include regular absenteeism of members, non-cooperative conduct or communication of members, reduced quality of important debates, and disruptions of the Question Hour.

The Parliament typically meets three times a year. These meetings are called 'sessions' — Budget Sessions, Monsoon Sessions and Winter Sessions. Each of these has 'sittings', where the Parliament meets to deliberate upon proposed laws, discuss important matters of governance, and seek explanations from the Executive on its decisions and actions. Usually, the Parliament sits for 6 hours a day during sessions. This can be extended on special occasions or when there is a need to complete urgent business. The State Assemblies too, have similar schedules.

LET'S EXPLORE

→ Study the data given in the following table. What conclusions can you draw about the functioning of Parliament over time? Compile data for more recent years.

Period of Lok Sabha	Number of sessions	Number of sittings
1st Lok Sabha (1952-1957)	14	677
2nd Lok Sabha (1957-1962)	16	567
10th Lok Sabha (1991-1996)	16	423
13th Lok Sabha (1999-2004)	14	356

→ Read the following statement of the former chairman of the Rajya Sabha, M. Venkaiah Naidu given in 2021: "...the productivity of Rajya Sabha during 2004-14 has been about 78% and it declined to about 65% since then. Of the 11 sessions [that he presided over], four of them clocked low productivity of 6.80%, 27.30%, 28.90% and 29.55%; during the year 2018, the Rajya Sabha recorded the lowest ever **productivity** of 35.75% under the impact of disruptions." What conclusions can you draw from this statement? What implications does this have for the role that the Rajya Sabha is expected to play?

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The Parliament and the State Assemblies have been envisioned as spaces for thoughtful debates and discussions where laws are made in the interest of the people. However, when debates are disrupted, sessions are cut short and some bills take years to be discussed and passed, it becomes a matter of concern.

LET'S EXPLORE

- → Take up a small group project. Compile data regarding the functioning of the legislature in your state or union territory.
- → Seek an appointment with an MLA and gather information about challenges with respect to the state legislature.

Concerns have been expressed by sections of the society about the fact that a substantial proportion of their representatives in the Lok Sabha have criminal cases against them, and that many sessions are marked by angry or biased debates that do not seriously address issues affecting the people.

The media also plays an important role in communicating the concerns of the electorate. These cartoons express them with humour, a practice common to all healthy democracies.

Fig. 6.13.a. Monsoon Session: Expect thunder, lightning, storms, breaches etc. It's Monsoon Session.

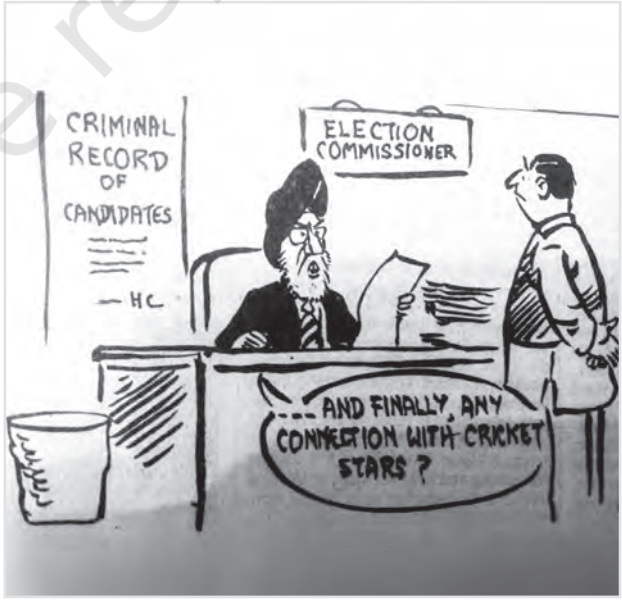

Fig. 6.13.b. Scrutiny of papers filed by candidates

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Yet, our democracy grows stronger when citizens stay informed and engaged. By asking questions, sharing their views, and participating in public discussions, people help shape better policies. Therefore, one of the best ways to overcome the challenges India faces regarding its legislature, is to ensure that many more citizens stay informed on matters of importance to society, participate in discussions through public debate on digital spaces that various government departments offer during policymaking processes, and constructively engaging with political representatives on policies.

Many more young leaders and diverse voices are entering public life, and technology is making it easier to stay connected and involved with governance. As future voters, your choices, and participation will play a key role in strengthening our Parliament and the assembly of the state you belong to, ensuring that they truly serve all people.

DON'T MISS OUT

Fig. 6.14. Atal Bihari Vajpayee

→ Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a former Prime Minister of India, said during a speech in the Lok Sabha, *"Sarkaarein aayengi, jaayengi. Paartiyaan banengi, bigadengi. Lekin yeh desh rehna chaahiye, is desh ka loktantra amar rehna chaahiye."* (Governments will come and go, parties will rise and fall. But the nation must endure, and its democracy must live on.)

→ What message do you think this gives about the role of Parliament and leaders in a democracy? Why is it important to protect democratic values even when political power changes?

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Before we move on...

- India's Parliamentary system ensures that power is shared, decisions are debated, and leaders are held accountable.
- The Legislature makes laws, the Executive implements them, and the Judiciary ensures that they follow the Constitution.
- The Parliament represents the voice of the people and reflects the federal spirit of our democracy.
- Both at the Centre and in the states, structures are designed to balance representation, responsibility, and unity.
- Checks and balances between institutions help protect citizens' rights and uphold democratic values.
- The functioning of the Parliament needs to become more efficient and productive so that the country's progress is not thwarted.

Questions and activities

1. Find out how many representatives from your state are in each House of the Parliament.
2. What makes the Indian Parliament the "voice of the people"? How does it ensure that different opinions are heard?
3. Why do you think the Constitution made the Executive responsible to the Legislature?
4. Why do you think we have chosen the system of bicameral legislature at the Union level?
5. Try to track the journey of a recent bill passed by the Parliament. Identify in which House it was introduced. Were there any major debates or disagreements? How long did it take for the bill to become a law? Use newspaper archives, government websites, and Lok Sabha debates, or ask your teacher for help.

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6. Choose a recent law passed by the Parliament. Divide into teams to role-play different parts of the process — MPs debating in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, ministers answering questions, and the President giving assent. Present a short skit showing how a bill becomes a law; enact a 'model Parliament'.
7. The Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, was passed with wide support. Why might it have taken over 25 years for this bill to be passed, despite being discussed for so long?
8. Sometimes the Parliament is disrupted and does not function for the number of days it is supposed to. What impact do you think this has on the quality of laws and the trust people place in their representatives?
9. Can you create 'interest' groups among students and list questions related to any policy that you may want to ask your MP and / or your MLA? How would these questions be different if it is to the MP instead of the MLA, and vice versa?
10. What is the role that the Judiciary plays in Indian democracy? What could happen if we didn't have an independent judiciary?

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CHAPTER 7

Factors of Production

For a country like India, the largest contribution to growth and productivity will probably come about from more efficiently using land, labour and capital, thus they must be used more efficiently.

— Bibek Debroy,
Chairman, Economic Advisory Council
to the Prime Minister (2017-24)

Fig. 7.1.

The Big Questions?

1. *What are the factors of production?*
2. *How are these factors interconnected?*
3. *What is the role of human capital in production, and what are its facilitators?*

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Fig. 7.2. A glimpse at the production of some goods

Introduction

Have you ever wondered how your clothes, shoes, school bag, furniture, phone, computer, etc., are made? Every product around you goes through a production process before it finally reaches you. This production process involves using resources or inputs required to produce the final product. The resources or inputs used in producing goods and services are hence called ***factors of production.***

Meet Ratna, who runs a small restaurant named Pause Point, on the city outskirts. Popular among highway travellers for its tasty, high-quality food, Pause Point is growing with a team of seven people who assist Ratna in managing the business. When she started five years ago, she had to choose a location, organise money for rent and equipment, hire staff, buy ingredients, and plan how to make her dream a success.

Businesses combine various inputs or factors of production to create goods and services, which also generate opportunities for people to engage in economic activities.

Business: A firm, a shop, a factory, etc., which produces or sells goods or provides a service.

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LET'S EXPLORE

→ In small groups, study the economic activities around your locality. What are the different types of goods and services being made or provided?

→ Here's a small report that Latha, Asha, Mohan, and Kiran made. You can make your own report for shops of your choice.

Types of shops	Number in the locality	Goods produced or services provided	Types of inputs required
Grocery shops	13	Food grains, milk, bread	Packaged goods, perishables, storage space
Restaurants/ food stalls	8	Cooked meals, snacks, beverages	Raw ingredients like vegetables and fruits, gas, utensils; cook/helper
Vegetable vendors	15	Fresh vegetables and fruits	Fresh produce, baskets, weighing scale, cart or stall
Mobile repair shops	4	Mobile repair, mobile accessories	Tools, spare parts, knowledge and skills of mobile components and functions
Salons/ parlours	3	Haircut, grooming, beauty services	Scissors, creams, beauty products, water, electricity

Looking at your group's report, think about the following:

→ Where do people get the money that they need for their business?

→ Where did the hairdresser get trained?

→ Who taught the food vendors to cook?

→ What motivated the business owners to start their business?

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In economics, the inputs used in a production process or the **factors of production** are classified into four types — land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship. Technology is a facilitator and a crucial factor that enables businesses to produce more goods with the same or fewer inputs. Let's learn more about these inputs in the sections ahead!

Factors of Production

Land (natural resources)

The word 'land' in economics encompasses not only geographical land but also natural resources like soil, forests, water, air, sunlight, minerals, oil, and natural gas. Recollect the chapter on *Natural Resources and Their Use*, where we discussed different types of resources that nature gifts to us and how we use them. Businesses either purchase the required land or pay rent to use it for a period of time.

LET'S EXPLORE

Revisit the table in your report. Which of the items on your list can be labelled as 'land'?

Labour (human resources)

Labour is essential in production, involving physical and mental effort. Carpenters, farmers, construction workers, teachers, and doctors use varying levels of physical strength, knowledge, and **skill**. Everyone contributes differently through their work, helping create goods and services for society's needs.

Skill: The ability to do an activity or job well with practice and training.

People as a resource

Human beings play a key role in economic activities and production processes as they apply their knowledge, skills, and decision-making abilities to create goods and services. For example, a police officer maintains law and order, a scientist invents new technologies, a chef develops new recipes, etc. They all require a special set of knowledge and skills to perform well. Of course, they all must be dedicated to their work to do

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Fig. 7.3. Worker at a tea plantation

Fig. 7.4. Chemical engineer

Fig. 7.5. Carpenter

Fig. 7.6. Software developer

a good job. The word **labour** refers to the physical and mental effort used in production. However, **human capital** refers to the specialised skills, knowledge, abilities and expertise required to perform that labour. Thus, human capital is not just the basic efforts of labour but also the quality and efficiency of that labour.

Facilitators of human capital

Education and training

Education helps individuals gain knowledge, starting with basic literacy and extending to expertise in specific fields. What you

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Fig. 7.7. Education and training

Training: It is the process of learning the required skills to do a particular job or activity.

Cognitive: It refers to the process of learning, knowing and understanding.

learn in school enriches your knowledge and prepares you to solve real-world problems. For example, a civil engineering student learns principles of design and materials, which are applied to building infrastructure like roads and bridges. The challenge lies in creating durable, cost-efficient, and eco-friendly solutions. This is achieved through **training**, such as observing construction sites, testing materials, understanding safety procedures and hands-on application. With education and training, individuals are prepared to excel in their careers.

Healthcare

Good health supports **cognitive** development, allowing children to attend school regularly and learn better. Similarly, workers are able to give their best, physically and mentally, when they are of sound body. They are able to do more in shorter time periods, be creative, and do not have to be away from work due to ill health.

THINK ABOUT IT

How do infrastructure and healthcare systems like hospitals, primary healthcare centres, doctors, pharmacies, diagnostic labs, etc., contribute to developing human capital?

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Social and cultural influences

A culture of hard work, continuous improvement, and endeavouring to do things well has helped countries to move forward. There is a Japanese concept called *kaizen*, which means 'continuous improvement'. This concept has been applied in Japan since the mid-1940s and has helped Japan achieve higher standards of living for its people. Another example could be that of the German work ethic, which is deeply rooted in their history. Germany is renowned for its high-quality industrial output. They place a high value on punctuality, attention to detail and quality. These qualities of their human capital contributed to their rise as a global leader in technology and manufacturing.

LET'S EXPLORE

- → Let's do a small experiment. Make a list of 10 working adults in your family and neighbourhood. Ask them to describe the culture at their workplace. Share notes with your classmates. What did you discover? What are some adjectives that occur more frequently?
- → In the Tapestry chapters, you have seen examples of the art and architecture in India across several centuries. What do you think are the factors that enabled their creators to achieve such high levels of excellence? Discuss in groups and share in class.

Challenges to human capital

Our nation has come a long way in various aspects of human capital since independence. Literacy is an important characteristic of the population and helps enhance the skills and **productivity** of human capital. The **Adult Literacy Rate** in India is 85 per cent for males and 70 per cent for females as of 2023, as per the World Bank estimates. Despite progress in many areas, India faces challenges in developing human capital.

Productivity: Ability to do more in a particular time period.

Adult literacy rate: Percentage of people aged 15 and above who can read and write with understanding a short, simple statement about their everyday life.

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THINK ABOUT IT

- → Shivay, a student at Saraswati Vidyalaya in Grade 8, had to drop out of school two years back as his father lost his job. How do you think the loss of schooling years will affect Shivay when he grows up?
- → What problems could businesses face when they do not find workers with the required skills?

Fig. 7.8. Students writing an exam

According to the Economic Survey of India 2024, 65 per cent of people in India are below the age of 35 years. This means that India has a young, productive population, which may help the country reap the benefits of a demographic dividend. The demographic dividend refers to the benefit a country gets when it has a large number of young and working people. When more people are working and earning, and fewer people depend on them, the country can grow businesses and improve living standards. To take advantage of this potential, individuals must have access to quality education, health, training, and skilling, which would contribute to the nation's progress. You will learn more about this in the year ahead in the chapter on Demographics.

THINK ABOUT IT

Are some jobs more important than others? What would happen if nobody cleaned the streets, collected the trash, farmers stopped cultivating the crops, doctors were not available to treat patients, and so on?

Today, there is a vast variety of jobs requiring different kinds of skills. However, India has had a rich legacy of skill-based knowledge systems and workmanship.

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India's ancient skill heritage

For ancient Indians, work was a form of expressing their nature and striving for perfection, an offering to the deity or the receiver, as the case may be. It had to be created or done with devotion. The tools (a type of technology) used were worshipped; this tradition continues as *Viśhwakarmā pūjā* or *Āyudha pūjā.* So, creating products involved a unique blend of *kalā* (art) and *vidyā* (knowledge). Knowledge was passed on from generation to generation, and also built on. The *śhilpa śhāstras* are ancient texts that contain detailed design guidelines on sculptures, paintings, buildings, wooden items, and jewellery. For example, texts on sculpture prescribe exact specifications regarding postures, colours, measurements, and proportions of figures.

DON'T MISS OUT

Generations of families of sculptors have worked on constructing India's temples over centuries. They used their skills without expecting to see the finished outcome. They pursued excellence, considering work as worship by practising regularly and learning new techniques.

Stitched shipbuilding

Indians used a unique stitching technique dating back over 2000 years to make ships and boats, which they used to conduct maritime trade and cultural exchanges across the Indian Ocean. The technique involved stitching wooden planks together using cords instead of nails, which made them flexible and helped the ships navigate the Indian Ocean with ease.

Fig. 7.9. Re-creation of a 5th-century stitched ship

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LET'S EXPLORE

- → Many of the traditional techniques of production have either disappeared or are on a decline. For example, the stitching of ships saw a severe decline after the arrival of Europeans in the Indian Ocean in the 16th century. This technique is now used for small fishing boats.
- → Why do you think the use of indigenous techniques has declined? Discuss in the class.
- → Find out some techniques and products from your region that showcase human effort and skill. Explain briefly using drawings and text in the class.

Capital

Capital: In economics, any asset, whether physical or financial, used to produce goods and services.

Businesses also require **capital** that comprises monetary resources and durable assets like machinery, tools, equipment, vehicles, vending carts, computers, shops, factories, office buildings, etc., for their day-to-day operations. Just as Ratna would have required money to take the land on lease, buy the furniture and kitchen equipment, etc. These are all called 'capital' — money plus human-made resources that are used to produce goods and services.

Capital is essential to a manufacturing unit or a services sector enterprise. But where do businesses get the capital? Generally,

Fig. 7.10. Machinery

Fig. 7.11. Loans

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personal savings, family, and friends are the first source of funds and support for individuals when they start a business, just as Ratna did when she started her business. However, the funds were insufficient for Ratna to start the business, so she took a loan from the bank to meet the shortfall. She paid **interest** along with a part of her loan amount over a period of time. Similarly, large companies require a lot of money to expand their business; hence, they raise money from the general public through the stock market. The **stock market** is a special type of market where shares are bought and sold. Large companies raise money from the public by offering them a share of the profits, called a **dividend**. In other words, big businesses can raise money or financial capital through such a market and can sell shares of their business. You will learn the exact mechanism of how this works in the higher grades.

Interest: The amount of money paid by the borrower of a loan to the lender for using their money for a specific time.

Dividend: An amount of money paid regularly by a company to its shareholders out of its profits.

LET'S EXPLORE

Identify a factory in your region. Find out how much capital may have been invested in the construction of the factory (you may provide an estimate). What kinds of equipment does the factory use to create its finished products?

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship means starting your own business or creating something new to solve a problem. An entrepreneur is a person

Fig. 7.12. Bamboo and cane products, Arunachal Pradesh

Fig. 7.13. Food processing

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Fig. 7.14. Pottery products, Delhi

Fig. 7.15. Petrochemical plant

Startup
A startup is an entrepreneurial venture with limited resources that aims at rapid growth and expansion while leveraging technology.

who comes up with an idea, takes risks, gathers other factors of production, and works hard to make their **startup** idea successful.

An entrepreneur's vision for solving a problem helps bring innovative products and services to the market that benefit society and the nation. At the same time, they also create job opportunities and support livelihoods. In return, they derive a deep sense of satisfaction from seeing their dreams become a reality and serving the people.

Thus, an entrepreneur is one who:

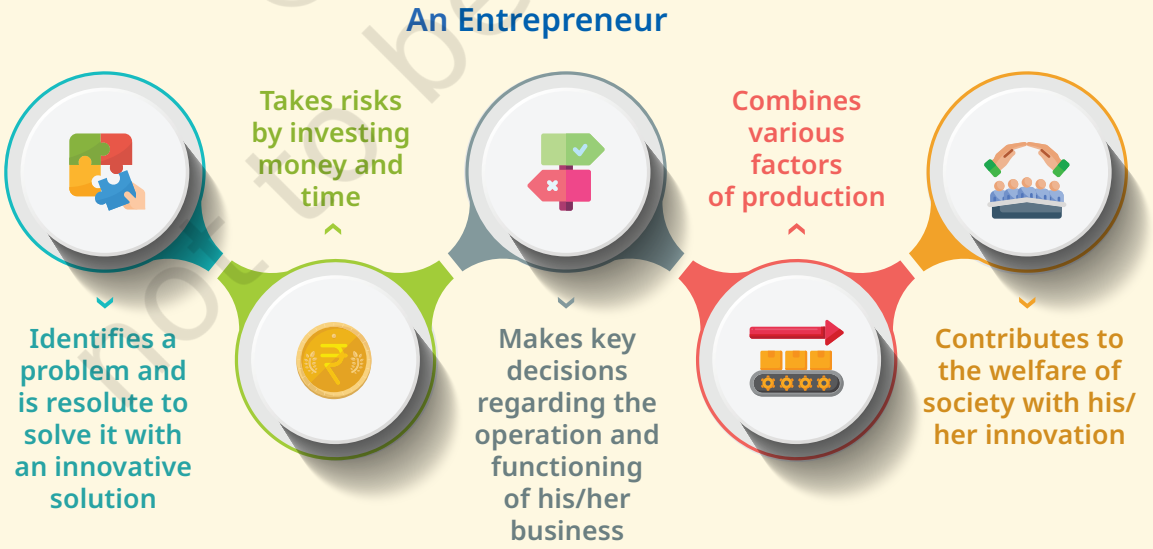

Fig. 7.16. Tasks performed by an entrepreneur

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The man who dreamed big for India

J.R.D. Tata — entrepreneur, industrialist and philanthropist

Fig. 7.17. J.R.D. Tata

Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoy (J.R.D.) Tata was one of India's greatest entrepreneurs and played a big role in building modern India. He was born in 1904 and became the head of the Tata Group, one of the largest business groups in the country. He believed that businesses should not only make money but also help society. He started India's first airline, Tata Airlines, in 1932, which later became Air India. Under his leadership, the Tata Group expanded into many areas like steel, cars, power, and chemicals. J.R.D. Tata was also known for caring about his workers and believed in providing them with good working conditions. He was a man of vision, hard work, and honesty. In 1992, he received the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, for his great service to the nation.

THINK ABOUT IT

- → What could be the lessons for young entrepreneurs that you can gather from the above case?
- → Does the existing knowledge of the entrepreneur help in finding solutions to the problem at hand? Or do they need to seek other sources?
- → Is profit the only motivation for an entrepreneur? Why or why not?
- → What are the other personality traits required to be a successful entrepreneur?

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Technology: An Enabler of Production

Technology means the application of scientific knowledge. For example, a camera converts light into electrical signals to create a digital image. Any production-related activity uses some form of technology. Some early forms of technology that have existed since ancient times are still in use today.

Today, newer and advanced technological developments are applied in various areas, making our lives easier. For example, payments can be made at the click of a button through UPI (Unified Payments Interface); farmers can get advance weather updates; Global Positioning Systems (GPS) can discover the shortest routes for transporting goods, and so on.

Fig. 7.18. Drones spraying fertilisers to improve crop health

Fig. 7.19. Robots assisting in surgical processes

Have you noticed how old technology gets replaced by a new, better one?

This process makes it easier for people and businesses to get things done and improve how they work. For example, instead of sending letters by post, we now use email to communicate with people quickly and at a lower cost. However, remember that technological progress does not always mean replacing old technologies — some, like pulleys and wheelbarrows, are still in use.

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Fig. 7.20. A wheelbarrow on a construction site

Fig. 7.21. Pulley used in boats

Now, let's look at examples of how technology is helping students learn, build new skills, and find jobs.

Technology paving the way for accessing knowledge, skills, and job opportunities

Fig. 7.22. Online learning

A variety of online courses are available to students through Government platforms like **SWAYAM** (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), which offers courses for Grade 9 onwards and operates on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) through which learners can explore subjects like robotics, aquaculture, textile printing, and so on that are free of cost. Students benefit from learning at their own pace, from anywhere, while pursuing other jobs or courses. Online portals, like the Government's **National Career Service**, help people find job opportunities across various sectors, from plumbing to accounting. This is how technology has eliminated geographical barriers, allowing people access to knowledge, skill development and jobs in India and abroad. The services to these online portals can be accessed through the following links:

- *https://swayam.gov.in/*
- *https://www.ncs.gov.in/*

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LET'S EXPLORE

- → Can you think of some technological advancements that have impacted the lives of people and communities around you? Talk to elders at home and in the neighbourhood about it.
- → Think of an invention that you would like to make to solve a problem. Write its related information on a piece of paper, such as its name, what it does, and how it works, sketches or drawings of what it would look like, and so on. Discuss with your classmates.

How are the Factors Connected?

The factors — land, labour, capital, entrepreneurship and technology are combined to produce goods and services, and the proportion of each factor used depends on the product. For example, output from the agriculture, construction, and handicraft sectors relies more on labour and thus is labour-intensive, while semiconductor chips or satellites require more capital, specialised machinery, and are capital-intensive.

These factors complement each other and are interconnected; in case of some missing or misused factors, production can become inefficient or can be halted. However, in some cases, new techniques can change the proportion used and output. For instance, increased machine use in agriculture can lower dependence on labour. Similarly, 3-D printing can help revive the dying art forms in textiles by producing handloom products at a large scale to serve the market. The production inputs are available at different geographic locations. Businesses can procure them from these varied locations and combine the inputs to produce goods and services. Thus, the geographic interconnectedness provides businesses with access to varied inputs. However, production activities sometimes face severe supply chain challenges. The **supply chain** is a network of individuals, organisations, resources, activities and technology that are involved in the production and sale of goods.

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When a disruption in the supply chain occurs due to relying on sources from far-off places, instead of local inputs, it results in a halt in the production process, as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic.

DON'T MISS OUT

India is the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer after China in 2025! Let's understand these ideas through a flow chart depicting mobile phone manufacturing.

The process of mobile phone assembly

Fig. 7.23

Human effort is involved at every stage of production to design, supervise, and improve products and processes. For example, teams of software, electrical, and mechanical engineers, along with project managers, use their expertise to develop a product. The entrepreneur provides guidance on how resources should be used. Then, procuring resources like land, factory space, machinery, and skilled workers requires financial resources. Together, all these inputs are essential, working like puzzle pieces to create the goods and services we rely on!

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Responsibilities towards Factors of Production

When we produce goods, we use natural resources like land, water, and minerals. However, these resources are limited and can be harmed if we are not careful. For example, in Tamil Nadu, many people earn money by working in leather factories. This helps the local economy, but the waste from these factories can pollute rivers and soil. In the same way, when old smartphones are not recycled properly, harmful substances like lead and mercury can leak into the ground and water. This pollution can be dangerous for people, animals, and plants. That is why it is important for producers to use natural resources responsibly — so that we can meet our needs today without making it harder for future generations to meet theirs. They should try to reduce waste, avoid pollution, and protect the environment while making products.

THINK ABOUT IT

How are local communities and biodiversity affected by such activities? Do you also know some places around you that have seen water and land degradation over time? Discuss in class.

So, it is important for producers to adopt sustainable practices to replenish natural resources for future use.

Fig. 7.24. Recycling industrial wastewater before releasing it into water bodies

Fig. 7.25. Use of recycled products as inputs

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Apart from land and natural resources, businesses have responsibilities towards their workers and employees, which are summarised below.

- **Fair compensation and working conditions:** Employers need to ensure that workers are paid fairly for their labour and that they work in a safe environment.
- **Skill development and training:** There is a responsibility to invest in training and education to ensure that workers develop the skills necessary to remain competitive in the labour market.
- **Workplace rights and protections:** Laws and regulations for workers' rights relating to fair treatment, preventing discrimination, and providing benefits like health care or paid leave should be adhered to.

Businesses are motivated to address social and environmental concerns in their operations to benefit society and biodiversity through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). This includes reducing polluting activities, addressing the well-being of local communities, treating employees and customers with respect, and so on.

DON'T MISS OUT

India was the first nation in the world to bring a Corporate Social Responsibility law in 2014 that mandated companies to spend 2 per cent of their average profits of the last three years on CSR activities.

Before we move on ...

→ Land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship are factors of production that are used in a particular proportion to produce goods and services. These factors complement each other and are interconnected.

→ Human capital is the knowledge, skills, experience, and ability of individuals that contribute to their ability to perform work and create economic value. It is influenced

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by education, training, health, use of technology, and social context that make people more productive in the workforce.

→ The resources help in the production of goods and services that serve society and need to be preserved and utilised judiciously.

Questions and activities

1. How are the factors of production different from each other? What are the difficulties you faced in classifying the factors of production in the exercise given in-text?
2. How does human capital differ from physical capital?
3. How do you think technology is changing how people develop their skills and knowledge?
4. A skill is something you learn and practice to get better. It helps you do things well, like playing a sport, creative writing, solving math problems, cooking, or even communicating well with people. If you could learn one skill today, what would it be and why?
5. Do you think entrepreneurship is the 'driving force' of production? Why or why not?
6. Can technology replace other factors like labour? Is this good or bad? Support your answer with the help of an example.
7. How do education and skill training affect human capital? Can they substitute for each other, or do they complement each other?
8. Imagine you want to start a business that produces steel water bottles. What kind of inputs are needed? How would you obtain them? Suppose one of the factors is missing; what happens to your business operations?
9. Interview an entrepreneur or founder to understand their motivation to start a business and the opportunities and

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challenges they saw. You can work in pairs to create a questionnaire to collect the information and share what you have learned in a report.

10. Think like an economist. Let's explore what happens when things change. If you were Ratna, what would you do in the following situations? Discuss with your classmates.

    I. Suppose the rent for your space suddenly doubles.
    - Will you raise the price of the food served to cover the costs?
    - Will you look for a cheaper location?
    - How does this affect your business?

    II. Imagine one of your helpers quits suddenly.
    - Can the remaining workers manage the same amount of work?
    - Will you need to offer a higher salary to attract a new worker?

    III. You receive a small loan to invest in better technology for your restaurant.
    - Will this increase the production or improve quality?
    - Will it help you reach more customers?

    IV. Suppose another restaurant opens in the neighbourhood.
    - How will you attract and keep your customers?
    - Will you improve your service, reduce prices, or offer something new?

    V. What government laws or rules should be changed to improve the ease of doing business?

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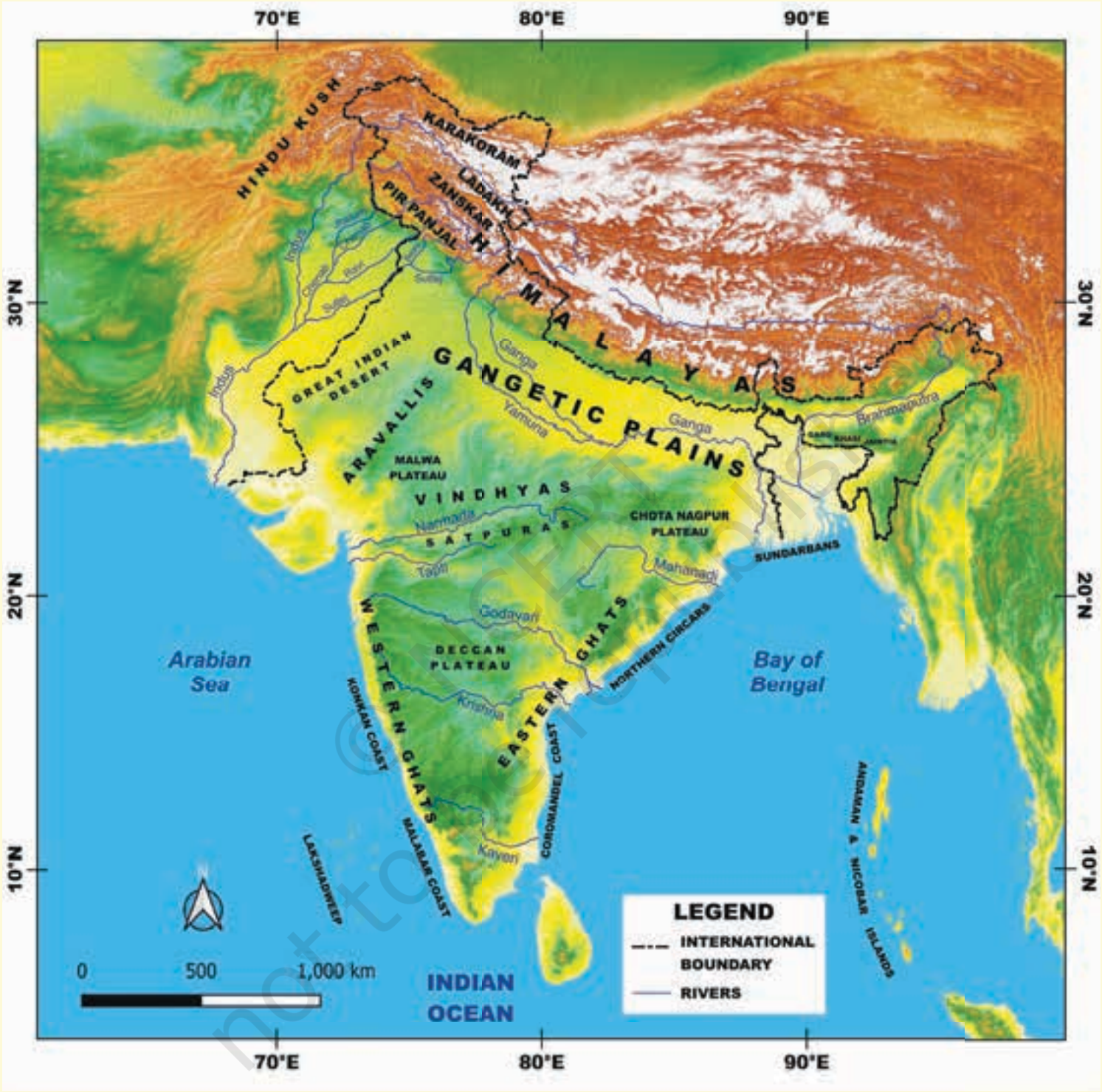
https://pminewyork.gov.in/pdf/menu/Political_Map_of_India.pdf



Physical Map of India

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Glossary

Alienated: Made to feel separated, unwanted, or no longer a part of something.

Apparatus: The complete structure of institutions and processes organized for a specific purpose, such as conducting elections.

Assent: Formal approval or agreement, especially by the President for a bill to become law.

Ballads: Song-like poems that tell a story, often passed down orally.

Ballot paper: A sheet of paper listing the candidates or parties that voters mark to indicate their choice in an election.

Barbaric: Extremely cruel or brutal; lacking civilization or culture.

Bibliophile: A person who loves and collects books.

Bureaucrats: Government officials who are not elected but help run departments and carry out laws and policies.

Cognitive development: How a child's brain grows and develops as they learn to think, understand, and solve problems.

Confederacy: A group of leaders or states that join together for a common cause.

Consortium: A group of separate organizations joining together for a common purpose or goal.

Corporate Social Responsibility: The responsibility of businesses to contribute to the wellbeing of society and the environment, beyond just making profits.

De facto: In reality or in practice, even if not officially stated.

Decolonisation: The process by which a country becomes free from foreign rule, and begins to recover its own control, identity, and way of life.

Demographic: Information about groups of people, such as their age, gender, income, and where they live.

Denounced: Publicly declared something to be wrong or evil.

Desecrate: To damage or treat a holy place or object with disrespect.

Devanagari: A script used to write Sanskrit, Hindi, Marathi, and several other Indian languages.

Enterprises: They undertake business or commercial activities that include both profit and non-profit entities.

Epoch: A very important or significant period in history or in someone's life.

Guerrilla warfare: A fighting style where small groups use speed, surprise, and knowledge of the local terrain to defeat larger armies.

Impelled: Forced by a feeling or idea.

Incensed: Very angry or enraged.

Indigenous: Native to or naturally existing in a particular place; originating from that area.

Innocuous: Harmless; not likely to offend or provoke.

Insignia: A symbol or badge representing a kingdom or ruler.

Kaizen: A Japanese approach to work that focuses on making small, continuous improvements in how things are done.

Legacy: Something valuable (like knowledge, traditions, or achievements) passed down from earlier times.

Martyrdom: Dying or suffering greatly for a cause, especially religious or moral.

Mercenaries: Soldiers hired to serve in a foreign army group, or organization.

Mulching: Covering the soil with a layer of material (like straw or leaves) to protect it and improve its condition.

Notorious: Famous for something bad.

Ornate: Highly decorated, often with complex and fancy designs.

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Persecution: The act of treating someone unfairly and cruelly, especially because of their religion, race, or political beliefs.

Philanthropist: A person who helps others by giving money, time, or effort to good causes, especially to improve people's lives.

Plunder: To steal goods by force during a war or invasion.

Premium prices: Higher-than-average price for a product or service.

Proxy voting: Voting in someone else's name (which is not allowed in fair elections).

Repatriation: The act of bringing back something or someone to their own country.

Resurgence: A rise or comeback of something after a period of little activity.

Retaliatory: Done in response to an attack or harmful action.

Riverine: Relating to or situated on a river or riverbank.

Sacked: (In warfare) Captured and looted a town or city.

Sanctum: The most sacred part of a temple (often where the main idol is placed).

Scion: A descendant of a notable family.

Siege: Surrounding a place (like a fort or temple) with an army to make the people inside surrender.

Spawning: The production or depositing of eggs by fish, amphibians, or other aquatic animals.

Stewards/Stewardship: The careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.

Stratagem: A clever plan used to trick someone or to gain an advantage.

Subduing: Bringing under control by force.

Subjugation: The act of bringing someone or something under domination or control.

Succumbed: Gave in to pressure or force; failed to resist.

Summon: To officially call people (like Parliament members) to meet.

Swarajya: Self-rule or self-governance; the concept of an independent kingdom that became central to Shivaji's vision.

SWAYAM: Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds. It is an online platform that makes learning accessible to all.

Syncretic: Combining different beliefs, practices, or philosophies.

Tenacity: The quality of being determined and persistent.

Thrive: Grow and develop.

Torrent: A large, fast, and uncontrolled flow — like a rushing stream or crowd.

Treachery: A betrayal of trust; disloyal behavior.

Treatise: A formal written work that deals with a particular subject in detail.

Tribunal: A type of court set up to deal with a particular problem or dispute.

Windfall: An unexpected, unearned, or sudden gain or advantage.

Workmanship: The skill, quality, and craftsmanship shown in making something.

Wretches: People who are in a very bad or miserable condition.

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